


PAT PRIBYL PAINTS

Artist Statement

Two waves of calm wash over me when I paint. The first happens at the beginning (as firsts should). It's at the exact iniquity moment when the first brushstroke, palette-knife swipe, or droplet of a paint-pour makes contact with the canvas, permanently altering its state. Erasing the past and creating something new is everything I wanted when I began recovery. See, the elephant in every room I walk into is this: I'm a recovering alcoholic. Before I chose to ask and accept the help I needed, my own shame overshadowed any chance in hell I had to *live* my life, much less create works of art. But once I chose to get better, to *be* a better version of myself, that shamed, empty guy ceased to exist. I am not "cured" by any stretch of the imagination. But I'm a different person than I was. And the initial calm when I put paint to canvas is a microcosm, a consistent reminder, of the potential joy I have yet to spark in the world.

The second wave isn't as sudden as the first. But it swells as my abstract acrylic coats begin to form recognizable figures, inevitably unintentional self-portrait or things I've seen. These puzzle pieces are never perfect, but always tell a story. The initial burst of anxious, if not manic, energy often has me furiously slashing palette knives and dramatically thrusting brushes at what seems like a sea of blank canvas. But as my internal rhythm settles and the abstractions get sharper, my inevitable vulnerability becomes evident. My unquenchable craving for a sense of belonging, for a community to both elevate myself and fall back on, is all that is left.

I first picked up a paintbrush when I hit my own rock-bottom and desperately craved a new beginning. Painting allows me to dive headfirst into my version of what Arthur Miller called "those dear dead days beyond recall." I get to leave the burdens of daily life in my wake, and go beyond the depths of my own history, until I've reached the wicked things I've hidden away from even my conscious self. These things, these monsters, are my traumas. My process, then, is inherently therapeutic. When I paint, I reveal how my traumas have affected, conditioned, and guided me to where I find myself today: a million miles away from them and still standing. I used to run from these beasts; but now, I respond to them the same way I have since the day I began to paint: I greet them as old friends and gently thank them for helping me grow.

The whole of my work may seem to be comprised of paint-pours, lone figures, or skylines in the distance. But I see the paintings as reminders: lessons I have learned to be absolute human truths through my experiences learning them. Fluid Pours allow me to never get too fixed on how anything "should" turn out. Individual Human Figures have no one to aid, or even witness, their sorrow, so they must find the strength within themselves. Cityscapes sprawl endlessly but these hometowns are without their population. Human-beings tend to get in the way of their own magnificence, (plus I think most of us can agree that people are the worst).

Transforming tyrannical, towering skyscrapers into familiar hometowns, capturing lone figures at their rock-bottom, and combining divided colors at their most fluid are beyond a coping mechanism for me. They are visceral, crashing waves of calm, order and beauty in chaos.
