'Antfarm' 'Housekeeping' & 'Roadkill'

Lukas Wegmuller

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Your work certainly stands out as having a style—I know when I’m looking at your work. How has your artistic style developed over the years?

Developing a style has certainly been on my mind for a while and I think as someone who wanted to be an artist in middle school, that was always on my mind—I wanted to have a unique style that was recognizably me and feel personal.

Drawing a lot is the way I went about that—I did a lot of work off of pictures and figuring out how proportions and perspectives work and then playing with that. I think some of my stuff is psychedelic but not to the extreme of stuff is psychedelic but not to the extreme of what most people think about psychedelic art. I like to set up twisting perspectives and ways in which I can bend things towards how I see them versus how they actually appear.

What does your process generally look like for your large scale pieces?

I do a lot of my brainstorming in my sketchbook and looking at other art as well as listening to podcasts. Writing to myself is how I navigate the ideas I want to work with and then I take those ideas and draw a composition several times until I get something that I like. Those drawings are usually pretty fleshed out too, not just loose sketches. I try to get in all of the details and then blow that up using the original drawing as a reference. In doing it bigger there’s more of an opportunity to render things fully and add color and textures. I would say reworking an idea until I like it then I commit to making a bigger piece.

How would you like people viewing your work to interpret it?

In the past I felt a little bit more controlling about, ‘I really want this to mean this, and this to mean this, therefore they should come to this moral conclusion.’ I think the type of work I’ve been doing has felt a little more playful and nostalgic and I want people to relate to these archetypes. While it is literally showing one thing, I’m trying to get at some sort of universal idea or state of being that someone can relate to.

A lot of my work is nude people in a natural environment and so I like to think of, ‘Where did we come from? What is the human as an animal and how are we related to our environment and how do we engage with our environment?’ In my recent work that can be destructive or inadvertently destructive—not intending harm but by our disassociation with nature we can just wreak havoc mistakenly. That’s one end of the spectrum—I’m also thinking about more symbiotic, interconnected positive relationships with the environment and the creatures around us. I’m sure you spend a ton of time in studio.

As a senior you get a space on campus that you have access to 24/7 and we each have our own cubicle, or table space where we can leave projects that are in progress and set ourselves up with a workspace.

I’ve been feeling really grateful to have this spot where we can indulge in our practice and have a committed workspace where I can get my projects where they need to be.

Being in studio is my main activity outside of school—I try to appreciate that were living in this dreamy life as if we’ve already successful artists with a studio space and going to critiques and being able to show work in the gallery on campus.

What advice would you give to Freshman year Lukas? Or just any freshman starting the studio art curriculum?

It’s good to check your ego. I struggled a bit with some of the foundations classes and suddenly having more structure around art making because it was always a private part of my life. It’s important to not be apprehensive about that and see what you can bring to any type of project. Really interpreting your prompt and finding out how you can make something unique is a good skill and having some discipline around what you’re doing. I think artists naturally make stuff and it can be hard to do that at a more constant rate than you usually do.

Also, having faith that you’ll find like minded people eventually — I didn’t really understand what the culture of Cal Poly would be before I came here so I felt a little bit isolated being a weird artist person and that not being what Cal Poly is primarily about. I think it’s good to have faith in yourself and untangle any judgements you have already come to have. You change a lot over the course of four years. I think taking up opportunities to meet people and engaging in the community and going to events that might attract people like you. Eventually you scout out some kind of community but it can be frustrating when you don’t find that immediately.