



The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective Presents:

SPOT ON!



Photograph by Jeremy Burke, 2021

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Interview with Jeremy Burke

Edited by Meaghan Sweeney

The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective are a group of creatively driven youth who act as a voice for an emerging generation of the arts within the Windsor Essex region.

'Spot On!' is Vanguard's new artist interview series edited by members Meaghan Sweeney and Alexei Ungurenaşu. These interviews offer a spotlight for emerging and established local artists who work in various media to discuss and promote their past and current art projects.

Jeremy Burke (he/they) is a multidisciplinary artist operating out of Windsor, Ontario. Often working in comics, collage, theatre, and music, they are interested in individual vs. collaborative artistic processes and how we build and recognize narratives through visual signifiers.

How did you get started in the arts?

When I was young, I was always drawing. My favorite cartoons and comics inspired me. I had lots of ideas, and drawing was one of the easiest ways to get them down, so I would draw little machines, inventions, monsters, and robots. At a young age, I was exposed to the arts as a "scene" through children's theater and I was intrigued by the pageantry of theater and sets, even when it came to children's shows. I wanted to understand how everything was done, which meant I was thinking about visual components early on.

Does your methodology change between disciplines?

Changing methodologies and integrating them between disciplines became something I grew accustomed to. I think about it in terms of how the process can support the concept. Visual arts can be a reclusive practice that contrasts starkly to the theater, which demands other people — even if that is just the audience. Switching between collaboration and being the editor of my ideas is creatively interesting. I find integrating approaches between disciplines extremely compelling: making visual arts collaborative or performance more solitary as an example.

Collaborative work versus independent work also has a huge effect on work ethic. There are many personal drawings I have never finished, but working with others usually calls for a collective decision to stop the project which is less likely to happen, meaning we see it through. Projects may be very different from the original idea in a group setting, but they get done, and I wish I could do that alone, even if I'm glad that I did not continue some independent work.



R, March 2021. Traditional Collage with Digital Manipulation

Are there any consistent concepts that have found their way into your work?

When it comes to illustration, it's just things that I like to draw the most: skulls, robots, clowns, and machines. They end up being the things I lean on when I'm not sure what direction I would like to go. Concepts change all the time thematically. Life and death have been something I have noticed I approach a lot. I have recently noted that the theme of outward portrayal reoccurs throughout my work: a lot of symbols of the tools of performance such as masks and clown makeup. The job of performance is to be perceived. An illustration is the creation of something separate from me being made to be perceived. I recently posted a drawing I made of a guy with a house as a head; I realized that I never draw the interior of the house, only the exterior, much like the mask.



Self-Quarantine, April 2020. Digital

What is your creative process?

My process is always changing, which I believe it should be. Whatever ideas I intend to convey or explore dictate the way I might approach the work. Starting is always the hardest part, but it is easy when you don't know you've already done it. I am learning to find my start in things I've already done: a mess I've already made, a conversation I've already put the work into having, or a terrible photo I took while my phone was in my pocket. It's all fair game.

Once you have something to start with, there are so many different directions to go in. You can't be wrong picking one because you can always just pick another one later. It can be hard. There are times when I don't have the impetus. I don't know what I'm doing. That's usually when I practice my technical skills.

What are potential projects you dream of being able to complete in the future if you had absolutely no limits in terms of resources, time, energy, or money?

I would love to do a graphic novel — not necessarily in the fully traditional sense, just to be able to make a bound series of images that's cohesive. Another thing I would like to do is a completely free mail art program. Anyone who wants to could get a subscription



MA//TCH, November 2019. Traditional and Digital Collage

and receive artwork once a month from different artists each time. It would be hard to do that and pay all the artists fairly so it would have to be in a world free from limitations. I think it would be nice to have a little art in your life. It could be local art, or any type of art, which is part of the fun of it; it can be anything that can be sent in the mail.

What are your favorite parts of being a creator in Windsor and what are some challenges?

Windsor's interesting because we have the Art Gallery of Windsor, which is great, and besides that, we also have a lot of small locally run galleries and collectives. They do not take up much physical space. In some

ways, it's a little bit easier to break into the scene in Windsor because it's a bunch of small pods that you can kind of jump into, and they're all different.

A challenge with Windsor, in general, is that things are a little bit disconnected, especially from the rest of Ontario. There could be more funding for the arts in this region. I would love to see more promotion of and funding toward projects of exploration in art, where the goal isn't just to upgrade something or improve an area, but to freely explore artistic ideas. Again, we have the AGW, but it also takes up some of the arts funding because they're more established. Smaller organizations might have to compete with each other for remaining funds, but they're resilient, and they make things work in the end.



The Tower, April 2021. Digital

How can readers help support local creators?

I think a big part of what Windsor-Essex creators need right now is for things to start happening again — having people get out and support in any way that they can, safely. People could help by promoting creators as things open up because artists need exposure, especially now. In addition, I think that being open-minded about the type of art that is shown would help greatly. Not everything is meant to be for sale, so being open about what they can enjoy is crucial.



The Fool

Baldwin & Burke

MAJOR ARCANA

Tarot Deck



The Magician



The High Priestess



The Empress



The Emperor



The Hierophant



The Lovers



The Chariot



Strength



The Hermit



Wheel of Fortune



Justice

*Baldwin & Burke Major Arcana Tarot Deck, December 2019. Digital Photography and Prints.
Collaboration with artist Claire Baldwin (1/2)*



Baldwin & Burke Major Arcana Tarot Deck (2/2)

We thank Jeremy for being our third guest in the Spot On! interview series. We cannot wait to see where he will go and what they will do next.

If you would like to keep up with Jeremy's work in the Windsor arts community, you can find him on Instagram @thejeremyburke.

If you enjoyed this interview, follow the Vanguard Youth Arts Collective on Facebook and Instagram @vanguard.collective and stay tuned for our September interview with Nick Hildenbrand!