



The Vanguard Youth Arts Collective Presents:

SPOT ON!



Photo of Brodie by Maria Mediratta (2022)

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Interview with Brodie MacPhail

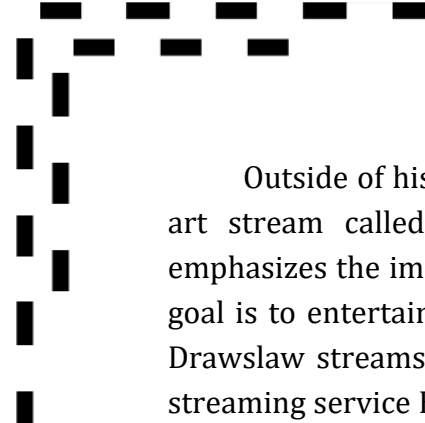
Edited by Alexei Ungurenaşu

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 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.

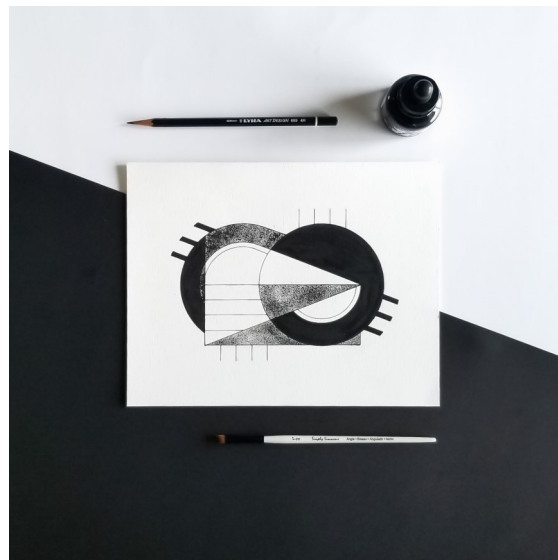
Brodie MacPhail (he/him) is a freelance artist living and working in Windsor. He graduated from the University of Windsor's Fine Arts program in 2019, where he received the Mary Demarco Award for outstanding students. Since graduating, he has worked for a range of local businesses providing art and design. Most recently, he designed the UWindsor HRG logo, Incubator Arts Lab's sign for their new brick and mortar location, and he continues to create posters for local events in addition to ink and digital illustrations.

Brodie's art practice focuses primarily on the dichotomy between control and submission. This is often shown through the use of clean/ precise lines and shapes in contrast to organic textures. He plays with what elements are confined within visible and sometimes invisible borders. His work is centered around the balance of all those elements, and they're often depicted in stark black and white inks to evoke a strong contrast. Brodie strives to grab the attention of the audience through bold shapes and then set their mind at ease through alignment, balance, and symmetry.



Outside of his physical art practice and freelance work, he co-hosts a weekly virtual art stream called Drawslaw. Drawslaw is a two-person collaborative stream that emphasizes the importance of creating art and cultivating a welcoming community. Their goal is to entertain and inspire others to create new things and improve their art skills. Drawslaw streams independently on Twitch as well as in contract with Adobe on their streaming service Behance. They strive to create an engaging art space where artists of all skill levels can feel comfortable drawing along with their live suggested prompts.

Through live streaming, Brodie experiments more with colour and develops character designs. Last year alone, Drawslaw created over 500 live-drawn images and had over 2000 audience-submitted works.

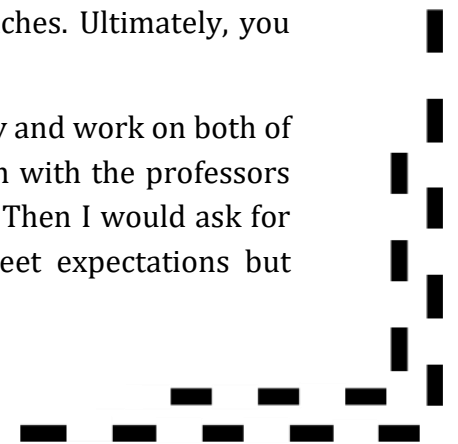


"Roundabout" (2021): Black Artists' Ink, Tombow pen, and texture sponge on printmaking paper

I've come across a few logos and other promotional designs you've done for local organizations in the past couple of years. Can you tell us more about these projects and how you were able to find such opportunities?

You will often hear "it's not about what you know, it's about who you know," and there is some truth to this, but I truly believe it takes both approaches. Ultimately, you need to grow your knowledge and your community simultaneously.

During my time at the University of Windsor, I would always try and work on both of these things. For example, with many assignments, I would check in with the professors before I even started to ensure that my idea was on the right track. Then I would ask for follow-up meetings to ensure that my project would not only meet expectations but

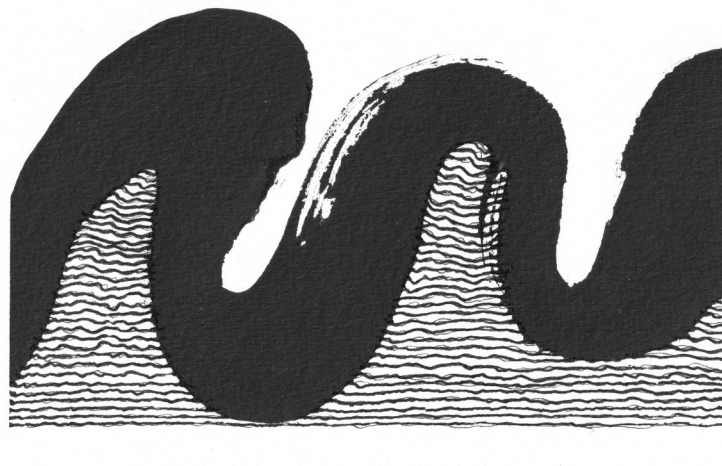


exceed them. Through frequent check-ins, I was able to build up a good rapport and show that I was eager to learn, easy to work with, and passionate about improving my work. I'm grateful that this led to being considered for some work opportunities within the community. If these opportunities are presented to you, that's when you can further show what you know and develop a more intimate working relationship that could foster future opportunities. This extends to the biggest piece of advice I can give anyone who is considering going to art school, or someone who is currently an art student... to start interacting with your professors! I know that currently the landscape of online learning can make this difficult, but they are there to help you and they want to see you succeed. Start out with your favorite class and ask questions about the assignments, attend their office hours to see if you are on the right track, or show interest in learning beyond the lecture, and your professors will take notice.

Thanks to this approach, I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Kim Nelson at the Humanities Research Group on their redesign. I created their new logo, digital assets, and print promotional materials. I later worked with Dr. Jennifer Willet, designing the sign for the Incubator Art Lab downtown location. It was great working with both of them, and I am proud that I was able to create something that will be a part of this city.



"Space Cato" (2021): Digital illustration,
Photoshop on Wacom Intuos Pro



"Static Flow" (2021): Black Artists' Ink, Micron Pen on watercolor paper



"Lightning Strike" (2021): Digital illustration,
Photoshop on Wacom Intuos Pro

You also make ink illustrations. Do you approach your analog and digital works differently, and if yes, how so?

My ink illustrations are often very rigid. I take great care when doing these illustrations and I tend to be very methodical about alignment and balance. The process of these works often takes a lot longer to complete than my digital work as each decision is permanent and requires a lot of forethought.

These methodical processes do sometimes find their way into my digital work, but overall I use the flexibility of the digital programs to experiment more with working intuitively. I'm able to comfortably develop characters, organic shapes, and incorporate colour without as much hesitation.

Some of your recent illustrations often feature geometric shapes such as circles as well as lines and dots that inspire motion. Where do you draw inspiration for these works, and what is the intent behind how you arrange these elements?

When I'm creating a piece like that, I always start off with a grid. It helps to set the foundations of where the piece can move to avoid feeling overwhelmed. Sometimes inspiration for these pieces finds me when I'm looking out the apartment window to the city below. I bring abstractions of that into my work, while other times I experiment in the moment; either way, having that foundation really helps.

When arranging different visual elements, the most important aspects are balance and movement. I want the piece to grab your attention and gently guide your eyes through the composition. Of course, you can view the pieces in different ways, but the overarching smoothness and balance are at the forefront. A viewer could focus on the filled



"Rising" (2021): Black Artists' Ink,
Micron Pen on watercolor paper

forms or outlined shapes and see the structures each creates, or they could view the composition as a whole to see how these contrasts and weights interact with each other.

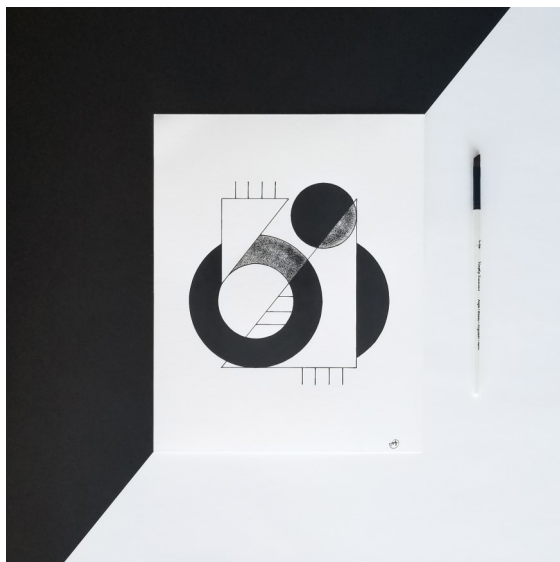


"Mod Monster" (2021): Digital illustration, Photoshop on Wacom Intuos Pro



"King of Hearts" (2021): Digital illustration, Photoshop on Wacom Intuos Pro

I see hints of dark fantasy and even cyberpunk in some of your characters. Do any specific artists or art styles inspire your character designs, and do you have any plans for these designs?



"Formations" (2021): Black Artists' Ink, Tombow pen, and texture sponge on printmaking paper

While no specific artist comes to mind, a lot of shows, movies, and video games influence what I create. I particularly gravitate towards dark fantasy and this definitely affects what I'm creating. I find these worlds extremely interesting and I like seeing how the conditions of these settings affect the characters living within them.

At the moment, I have no further plans for many of my digital works; to me, they are mostly just exercises, but there are a few that I'd like to revisit at some point and make art prints or apparel from.

How did the idea of livestreaming art sessions come about? What were the first important steps you took to develop your audience, and what have you learned so far through the process?

The idea of creating an art stream started when a friend approached me with the idea and suggested we do it together. Initially, I was extremely hesitant with having people watch me draw as I wasn't very confident in my drawing abilities. However, having scheduled drawing times that get us to practice up to 12 hours a week has really helped me improve my drawing abilities.

With streaming, the most important step for developing an audience is consistency. This is important when you are going live as you want your viewers to know where and when they can find you. Making it as easy as possible for them to watch your content and engage with you is key.



"WaveLength" (2021): Black Artists' Ink, Black Acrylic, Micron Pen on printmaking paper

Equally as important is perseverance. We all start somewhere, and there are days when your numbers won't be great or you won't like what you made, but that's normal. Don't let "perfect" be the enemy of "good."

One of the biggest effects that streaming has had on us is the growth of an awesome community. We've been able to make friends all over the world through live streaming and it even led to opportunities with companies like Adobe. Every week, we get the opportunity to collaborate and draw with artists all over the world and experience their work - it's amazing.



“Self Portrait” (2022): Digital illustration,
Photoshop on Wacom Intuos Pro

We thank Brodie for being our guest in the Spot On! interview series, and we look forward to seeing his future projects both online and around Windsor!

If you would like to see more of Brodie’s work, you can find him on Instagram @brodiemacphail. You can also find his art streams on Twitch.tv/Drawslaw.

For more artist interviews and other Windsor-based projects, follow the Vanguard Youth Arts Collective on Facebook and Instagram @vanguard.collective and stay tuned for our next issue!

