

100 Questions About Sturgis

By

John Sebelius

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Tanya Hartman

Chairperson

Luke Jordan

Committee Member

Maria Velasco

Committee Member

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The Thesis Committee for John Sebelius
certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Tanya Hartman
Chairperson

Date approved: April 17, 2012

Abstract:

Exploring my own identity and voice within diverse subcultures has become essential in my current artistic practice and process. My aim is to visually explore lived experience amongst culturally rich communities, without judgment or expectations. I recently returned from the 71st Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, which had an attendance of 600,000 riders. In an effort to immerse myself in the biker culture, I camped out for seven days at the rally. The constant rumble of motorcycles has faded from my ears but remain in my mind unsettlingly. After this experience I was left with a mind full of imagery but an intellect filled with questions. My most recent work investigates my connection and exploration of this masculine culture and the individuals I lived amongst.

I grew up in the heart of America. My home life was filled with love and support. I was raised in an active political household that celebrated diverse communities and people. This type of upbringing has helped me to be open to humankind and has led me to investigate individuals from unconventional communities. Exploring my own identity and voice within these diverse subcultures has become essential in my current artistic practice and process. My aim is to visually explore lived experience amongst culturally rich communities, without judgment or expectations. I recently returned from the 71st Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, which had an attendance of 600,000 riders. In an effort to immerse myself in the biker culture, I camped out for seven days at the rally. The constant rumble of motorcycles has faded from my ears but remain in my mind unsettlingly. After this experience I was left with a mind full of imagery but an intellect filled with questions. My most recent work investigates my connection and exploration of this masculine culture and the individuals I lived amongst.

I am fascinated with the duality between conceptual and perceptual information. The settings for a majority of my paintings are not specifically defined. A common theme throughout my work is the duality between attraction and repulsion. Topically, the surface of a painting can be treated to be visually appealing while the content behind the work may be off-putting. Although “100 Questions About Sturgis” is intended to be exhibited as a large grouping of paintings and drawings in a salon-style installation, each work is created as it’s own object. Grouping these works so closely together creates visual impact and tension and allows the viewer to experience the work much as if they were encompassed by a crowd of people. The physicality of my paintings is created

through a constant reworking process. Building up layers of ground and physically removing them allows me to connect with my subjects and materials on a physical and individual basis. The imagery for the work emerges through a constant drawing and sanding process. By scraping oil paint and embedding it with drawing, I hope to create a descriptive surface that can hold disparate images within a unified field. My works combine traditional and alternative materials with a colorfully impactful palette. My earlier work introduced color that was used to create a dingy and worn patina over which I incise imagery pertinent to my interests. Memory and time influence my treatment of the surface. My process involves a layering technique that overlaps layer upon layer of drawing. The deconstruction of the human portrait simplifies the viewer's attraction and connection to the image. I use lived experience amongst these communities to generate a visual language that explores issues of class, masculinity, and identity. Within the work, *I Have No Regrets*, I use the manipulation of the surface, color palette, and mark making to investigate emptiness and celebratory sexuality.

The evolution of my color palette transformed the tone of the work drastically. My earlier work was created almost entirely with pen and charcoal on a stark white background. The importance of these works focused heavily on use of line and the openness of space surrounding each portrait. The combination of spray paint and drawing juxtaposes the sensitivity of the line with the visceral and intense mark of the paint. Spray paint has an immediacy and vibrancy unlike any other painting media. Working mainly on wood allows me to manipulate and alter the surface through my physical practice. The addition of spray paint creates a spontaneous process that is loose and experimental. The work

Rare View uses a vibrant mark to contrast and encompass the delicate line of the deconstructed portrait.

Introducing sculpture into this body of work freed me from some of the artistic restraint that working solely in 2-D presented. The use of sculptural objects allowed me to work with scale and I felt a greater connection to folk art traditions and Americana art while working with these materials. The change of mediums allowed me the ability to depart from literal representational work and create a world that was fueled by perverse imagination. I used shelves to create tension. I juxtapose the sleek and coated wooden shelves and the handmade painted sculptures that inhabit the space. Once again, the theme of attraction and repulsion are present within this series. I used my sense of humor more clearly and I felt unrestricted to introduce a touch of the absurd. Connecting to my own personal identity and family history through art creation has become essential in my current artist practice and has forced me to explore my own masculinity. Growing up in a family that defied traditional gender roles, I am intrigued in examining ways in which gender is perceived and explored within various communities. Memories and dreams surrounding certain individuals and images continue to serve as inspiration for the work. It is in the interplay between expression and investigation, drawing and painting, landscape and the figure, that I hope to locate myself as a visual artist, educator, and humanitarian.

The following are selected documented pieces and installation views from the exhibition.



“100 Questions About Sturgis”, installation view of the East Gallery, 2012



“100 Questions About Sturgis”, installation views of the East Gallery, 2012



(Side A)



(Side B)

I Have No Regrets, oil and acrylic on wood, 48"x2"x64", 2012



Love Darla, oil and acrylic on wood, 24"x24", 2011



Rare View, pen and spray paint on panel, 16"x16", 2011



Peg and Ron, oil and acrylic on panel, 55"x60", 2012



Staci, oil on panel, 52"x64", 2011