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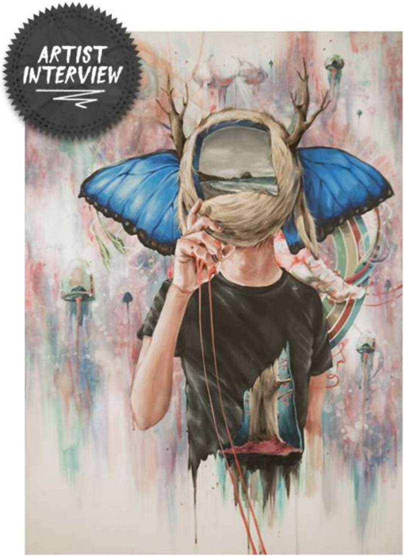
Artist Interview: Pat Perry

by **Evan La Ruffa**



Between train cars and mopeds, and over the course of thousands of miles, Pat Perry slowly realizes his dream of busting outside the confines of the mundane. All too often that monotony can squelch creative impulses, but this intrepid illustrator is pretty determined to avoid that at all cost. After getting in touch with Pat over email, we exchanged a few wayward text messages and in the end, missed each other in Chicago. It was between stops on this summer expedition of his, that he was able to answer some questions about the nature of his incredibly detailed work.

In a modern art era where so much is done digitally, Pat's calculated and surreal illustrations bend back the paradigm by once again elevating the work elaborated by a traveler's hands. His illustrations feels perfectly proportioned, almost as if in motion. Less reliance on symmetry and more focus on flow. There's an energy about the continuity and vibrance of his images, whether the color scheme is brilliant or tempered, and his ability to satisfy a breadth of clients while still

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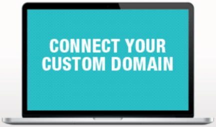

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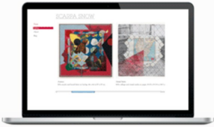

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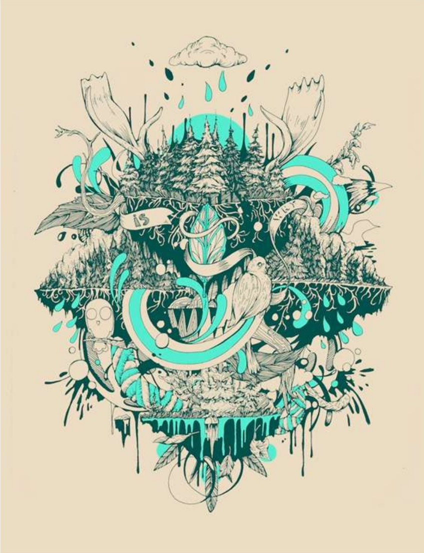
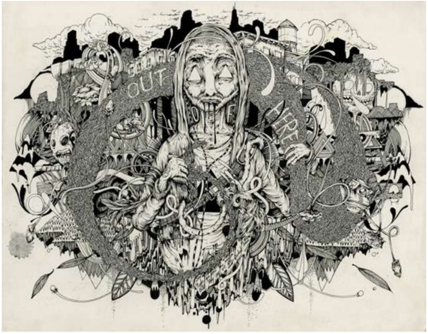
solidifying his fine art itch is admirable. Pat is dedicated to staying on his creative toes, which only means good news for those of us who know he's on to something.



Pat! We tried to link up when you passed through Chicago, sorry we couldn't make it happen… glad you enjoyed my city though…

It was a good trip, I rode a moped to Chicago from Grand Rapids, Michigan. Some of my favorite people live in Chicago, and we spent the next week making mischief. Quimby's bookstore was amazing as usual. After a week I had to escape, so I was picked up by my buddy Rattlesnake Jones and his dog Ivy Lou in an old ford van that we drove all the way to Virginia.



Nice man…what had you been up to before the travelling? I bet drawing creepy, painstakingly intricate illustrations was part of it…

This summer has been spent mostly traveling and working on personal art pursuits through sketchbook entries and photography. In the past two months I 've been through about 20 states and hopped freight trains over 2,500 miles. Traveling is the best way I've found to liberate myself from the illusions of my own small life. In certain ways, I've learned more spending nights under an overpass talking to an old rambling man than in classrooms. To grow as an art maker, I must grow as a person. To grow as a person, I have to toss myself into the unknown!

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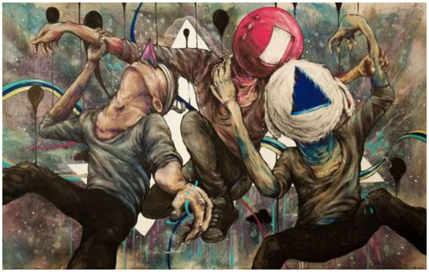
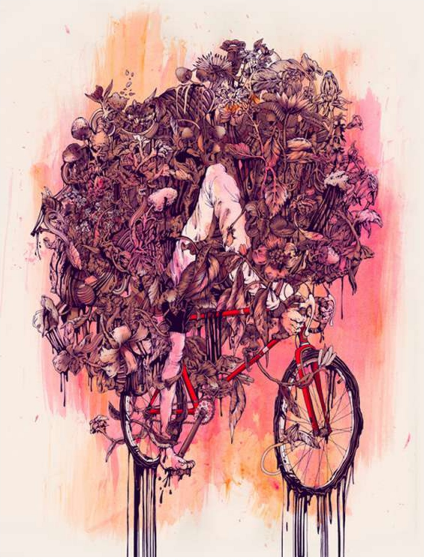


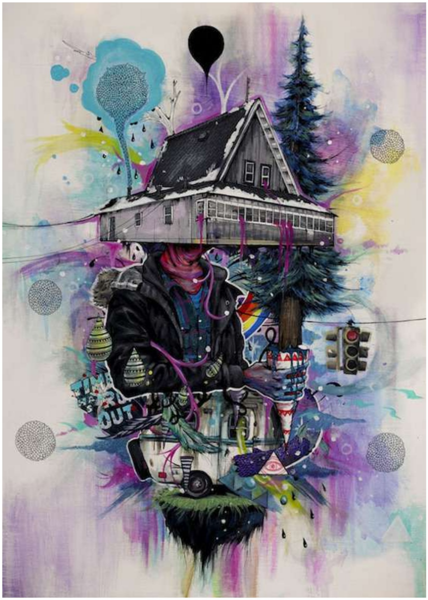
I like the outlook. Have you always been an illustrator? Ever dabbled in other creative pursuits?

I have always loved drawing, and picked up painting along the way too. Mostly my creative endeavors have spanned between the realms of illustration and fine art. I've always hoped that one day I'd make a film… cinema and movies fascinate me.



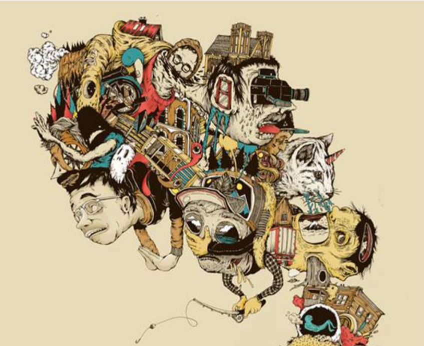
You've worked for some fun clients. Do you think your work suits a certain type of company, and what made your favorite client (whomever that has been) so good to work for?

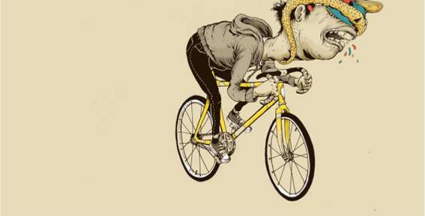
I've had such great luck with clients. Almost always, the clients I work with are respectful, open to new ideas, and enthusiastic. I would like to think that I can shape my work for several different types of companies, that's the whole challenge of illustration, right? I'd like to think that I can usually communicate ideas between myself and the client to the point that we'll achieve the tone and feeling they're looking for. I have a lot of favorite clients, one fantastic one this year was T-Post. They gave me a news story to base an illustration off of, and then they printed it as a tee. This was such a fun project and they let me experiment quite a bit with my final design.



Indeed man! We featured T-Post a while back, what a cool project! I've also really enjoyed your blog – it's a mix of photography and glimpses into your "sketchbook shenanigans." Do you like updating your blog, or does it feel like a technological extension you could do without? I have to say, some of the photos you've taken are also pretty striking…

My blog is super helpful because it's a way for me to update a whole network of friends, family, internet stalkers, and art fans as to what I have been up to. Art is for sharing, and the internet is quite the vehicle to make that happen. The blog is sometimes tedious to always update, but its worth it when I see there are people that really enjoy following it. My photos for the most part, I just consider to be a pretty documentation of some things I've experienced lately. I don't consider myself a photographer as much as just a person encountering neat things that move me.



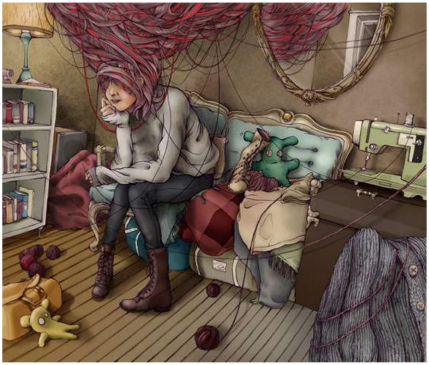


Recently I was talking to a friend about how people meditate without even calling it that, for example, when they lose themselves in a sketch, painting, poem, etc. Everything falls away as the focus gets increasingly pointed. Do you relate to this idea at all? Is drawing meditative if not cathartic for you?

Art is an escape in a way, but it's also the outcome of many of my most personal, complicated, and contemplative thoughts, especially recently. That's not to say that these thoughts are to be translated to the viewer, but it's inescapable that many times the tone of one's art reflects the tone of their thoughts. I do feel that drawing is meditative in the sense that it's part of my routine and I need it to stay sane. I really have a ton of fun making art…

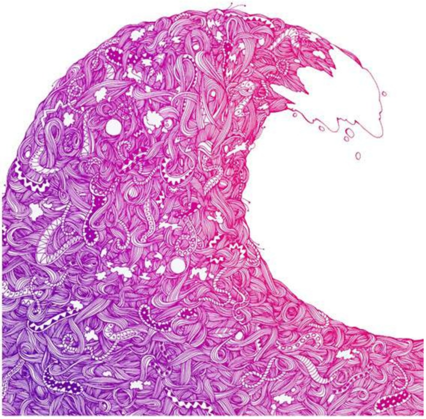
How would you describe your style?

I think my fine art style is changing rapidly. Already, my next batch of paintings, I feel are going to be very different from the ones in the show I just had. I'm continually trying to dial in the tone and feeling I want to convey, and that means constantly changing up mediums and subject matter. For a while it scared me to not have just one distinctive style, but I want to stay honest and boundary-less with what direction I can go.



Your piece "Where We Were" with the girl's head vacated to allow a view of a shoreline, is a piece we featured in our highlight of your work a little while ago… we love it.

Thanks! That piece was part of the show I just had at C.A.V.E. gallery. For me, that painting was an important catalyst for the work I want to be creating in the future. There are parts of it that I feel were pretty successful. (It needs a good home by the way!)



Whats up next for Pat Perry?

I'm creating a bunch of new themed work that I'd like to try to publish as a book when it's all finished. This new body of work is also in preparation for another show, though I haven't nailed a date of when I think it'll all be completed. As Autumn hits Michigan, you'll find me out in the orchards and countryside, or tucked away at my desk working.

Lovely. Now, if you'd name one artist or musician our readers should check out.

I just discovered the poetic work of Robert Montgomery lately. I love how he uses words as artwork. As for music, check out Mutual Benefit.

Interview by Evan La Ruffa of IPaintMyMind.org

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