

99 WRITING

Thoughts Onto Paper

by Pretty S.

TYPE
NARRATIVE

Since I was younger, around kindergarten, I always had an interest in art. Whether it was painting makeup on my dolls' faces, or drawing similar but jagged replicas of cartoon characters, I always found a way to express myself. It always made me feel more confident and it was a way to visually display my thoughts. Every Friday, I would be so happy to get my hands stained with various colors during art class, while a lot of the other kids were just happy to miss our math class for the day. I always would admire the not-so-perfect graffiti-covered walls around the city and the unique amount of artistic expression my mom and I would see out of the corners of our eyes walking around the Mission/Valencia District. I always felt like art was a strong way of showing who you are to the world; it's what makes you different from everyone else.

Experience. The word that always bothered me. The thing I thought I had to have to be the person I wanted. The word that haunted my everyday life. Can you be an artist without experience? Teaching? I don't know. But I did have "experience" in a certain

sense. Life experiences, not just the cherry-picked, sugar-coated best moments of my life. Something to base my art off of, and that's plainly my life—whether it's mourning, happiness, or some sort of pain—I think of it all as experience. After all, without it I don't know where I'd get my inspiration from. I think I put myself into every art piece I create; it's created from emotion. It's created from that feeling of pain you have where you can't seem to stop the flow of tears and emotion pouring out from your heart. It's created from that feeling you get where you're so exuberant and overwhelmed with happiness that you can't stop smiling, laughing. So, this is my experience: the memories I have locked up in my head of who I am. Is that enough to paint the Mona Lisa? Well...not spot on, but I think that's just because of the type of life I've chosen to live.

My biggest inspiration ever since I was little has probably been my dad. My dad is an artist and a musician, and he raised me around a lot of punk rock music and artwork. My dad's work and his life always made me feel like I could accomplish my goals. He told me that since he started his first band he wanted to get signed to STT Records, a famous record company, and in the end, he accomplished his dream. It made me feel like if he could do it, I could do it. My dad always was there to help critique my art; he always had a suggestion. It could be frustrating sometimes, being a little girl who just sketches anime characters and Powerpuff Girls, my dad would always tell me to fill the page up. I didn't really feel like my cartoons were appreciated. I felt this wall between who I wanted to be and who I really was. I wanted to get enough guidance to find myself. That was before I developed my own style. I was still learning how to draw, so his constructive criticism wasn't always so clear to me. I always knew my dad was an

artist. I would see the weird, complicated pieces hung up in the hallway of our house, the type of artwork that made you think. Complicated detail so small it almost tricked your eye for a scribble. I wanted to know how to do it. How could I fill a page with my thoughts alone, with no help from anyone else?

Music has always been a heavy influence for me. When I was six, I started playing piano, flute, and singing. I liked to play piano, but in my lessons, I always felt like I had to stay in the box. I couldn't ever make my own music, like the music my dad always had playing around the house. I didn't have the access to discover my own music as a girl in elementary school. Most of the time I would be listening to whatever would be spinning around the record player. As I got older and I started developing my own taste for music, when drawing or working on a piece I would always have something playing in the background. "Psycho seventy-eight, talkin' bout', twelve o'clock, don't be late. All this horror business, my mirrors are black!" I would sharpen my pencil, then sing along to whatever was playing, whether it was the misfits or something like the Addicts. "*Viva La Revolution!*" I feel like people develop who they are, their character, based off of music. And since character develops from music taste, could my art be influenced by music? When I'm drawing, if something dark starts playing, I feel like I'm in that kind of mood. If something happier turns on, I'll feel more excitement and whatever I'm drawing might change. The outcome of my work always depends on the mood I'm in and the kind of music playing around me.

Art has always been something I've been confident in. No matter what, it never judges you, you can spill your thoughts and feelings onto paper. You can be who you want to be through art. It always has been an alternate world, a place where I decide what goes where, when I tell a story visually. On the inside, I feel like everyone has a voice in their consciousness telling them what's right and wrong in a social situation. In a way, you're the biggest influence on yourself and you create borders for yourself based on

the way you feel and who you think you are. When it comes to self-expression though, I feel like you can come out of the box that society labels and traps you in. You can show what you're interested in and what impact you want to leave on the world through art.