



Street Business: From Graffiti Artist to Entrepreneur (The Story of Jason Eatherly)

ABSTRACT

This Capstone examines and explores the cultural transitions of one modern graffiti artist. Through interviews, research, and community events this project uncovers questions of identity, authenticity, and commoditization.

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Chapter 1

Introduction



(Photo Credit given to KnowATX)

For this Capstone project, I examined and explored current cultural transitions of one modern graffiti artist. For many graffiti and street artists, the transition from the streets to the gallery is nothing new, but for an artist like Jason Eatherly, it has been a way to turn a single image into a career. Eatherly's transition, over the past six years, from graffiti and street artist to fine artist and entrepreneur raises questions of identity, recontextualization, authenticity, and commoditization. Creating a dialogue around these themes could illuminate alternate paths for other street artists looking to make a career out of their chosen medium of self-expression. Through this project, I have identified different audiences, context, and my positionality on this topic through a Cultural Sustainability lens. Through this process, I have included the thoughts and perspectives of street artist Jason Eatherly, an Austin based gallery director Todd Gresley who hosted Jason's first solo exhibit this May, and Molly Maroney from SprATX who provides resources to artists looking to become entrepreneurs. I accomplished this project through formal and informal interviews, attending two local events in the Austin area, and through research over the course of this semester. Within this paper, I will provide a brief overview of the history of graffiti art, analysis on the topic of graffiti/ street art and the cultural identity issues surrounding it, and my reflection and positionality on the topic within the introduction. In chapter six, I have provided literature analysis on ten resources that have been critical to the construction of this project. These pieces touch on topics of art, hip-hop, graffiti artists, cultural partnerships, cultural sustainability, and identity.

In chapter three, I give an in-depth perspective into the life of Jason Eatherly, his art, and the business he has created. In chapter four, I investigate Jason Eatherly's use of social media to critically analyze the way he represents himself and his world around him. In chapter five, I examine the role that SprATX has in the life of Eatherly as well as in the Austin art community. I provide insight from SprATX co-owner Molly Maroney and artistic insight from local Austin artist Kristin Freeman. In my final chapter, I revisit the key question I set out to investigate through this project which is "How does the identity of the graffiti artist evolve or change once their art is taken off the streets, and can the artist still be recognized as a street artist once they transition into the fine art and business worlds?". I finish this paper with a look to the future and what all this means for the field of Cultural Sustainability.

As I explored project ideas I was drawn back to the work I had done throughout this graduate program on graffiti art and street artists. Over the past three years, I have fallen in love with the cultural explosion of street art I have experienced as I moved around the country for work. It was when I was living in Denver that I took interest in street art as I came across a sign that stated: "please call to tag." I thought it was interesting that business owners were permitting artists to legally tag their property. This one instance raised so many questions for me that I decided to examine street art and graffiti culture in Denver further. I started talking with and meeting local artists like Josh Chavez who goes by the street name EFFIT about themes, techniques, crews, run-ins with the law, trains, and painting for money. Chavez was a great resource and helped me understand the policy shift the city has undergone since the 1980s. Denver like many cities had a different attitude towards graffiti and street art in the 1980s. Denver, in

particular, produced additional funding to incarcerate those tied to graffiti art around the city, but now the city embraces street art (legal I'm sure) with annual festivals, events, and city art districts.

I moved from Denver, Colorado to Austin, Texas in the summer of 2016, and much to my surprise Austin had an equally robust street art scene. I have to mention that I have never painted, tagged, or thrown up a piece in my life and moving to a new city hoping to continue my quest to learn more I knew was going to be challenging. I needed to find a piece of art to focus on for my Arts and Social Change course and through that research, I discovered Jason Eatherly's Queen Eli piece. It was perfect and met all the criteria for the assignment. Little did I know I would dissect Eatherly's piece deeper than even the artist himself had. I love street art for the creativity, the sheer self-developed talent, and the community of inclusivity it creates. I have seen fans of all ages out at the Hope Outdoor Gallery here in Austin and artists are always willing to take a moment to speak to a fan. Jason Eatherly's art and entrepreneurial spirit inspired the focus for this Capstone and with my background in retail management a fascination about the process of how a single image can turn into a career.

Many different types of Graffiti can be traced back thousands of years, but it wasn't until the 1970's in New York City that Graffiti became a movement. Crews, gangs, and individuals tagged everything in their power as a way to mark their cultural space and territory. It was a cultural marker and a way to leave a silent statement. Taggers became known as writers, and Subway trains began to be referred to as moving museums. As New York City tried to crack down on the graffiti, it spread like wildfire and was engulfing the country. Graffiti was associated with low-income minorities and

held close ties to Hip-Hop culture. During this time Hip-Hop was an outlet for self-expression about issues close to home like politics, social issues, money, love, children, respect, and just being a good person and so was Graffiti. Graffiti wasn't just tagging your initials and throwing up your name it too had political and social messages embedded in the fabric of its core and sought justice for those marginalized and disenfranchised. As I researched more about early graffiti, I realized the same messages can be seen in pieces today, and the legacy of early street artists lives on in communities all over the globe. The term graffiti brings with it a sense of illegality and vandalism while street art appears to be the modern term for graffiti for hire or legal commissioned work. Through my research, I feel the term street art has had a different path from the start and appears to have always had a sense of entrepreneurial spirit associated with it. Artists like Jason Eatherly frequently uses these terms interchangeably, but for this project, I will use the term graffiti to reference illegal art and street art as legal or commissioned pieces. Ben Davis's piece [9.5 Theses on Art and Class](#) helped further direct my attention to the idea of a new wave of street art. Ben Davis says that "contemporary "street art" is in some ways quite distinct from graffiti art, more image-based and multifaceted and gimmicky. It grew up alongside graffiti but traces its lineage to the parallel and contemporaneous tradition of Jean- Michael Basquiat, Richard Hambleton, and Keith Haring- never members of New York's original graffiti scene, though often mistakenly associated with it"¹. Davis goes on to say that "yet graffiti and street art have grown up together, intertwined in the public mind, regarding their sensibilities, and above all, in their shared spirit of reclaiming the urban environment for personal expression."²

¹ Ben Davis, pg.100.

² Ben Davis, pg. 100.

This historical background information helped me realize that this resurgence of street art and graffiti is something that shouldn't fall by the side again. It should be embraced and elevated for its potential to bring communities together by creating cultural spaces of self-expression and positive change, but was this my ideal outcome for street art or could this be a cultural reality?

As I embarked on this capstone journey, I didn't anticipate the obstacles I would face or the uncertainty that this project would come to fruition. In the beginning, I knew I wanted to interview Jason Eatherly, and that dialogue would become the basis for my research but after many attempts of emailing I had made no progress and came to the realization that I wasn't going to be able to speak with him in the capacity I was hoping. I was let down and confused why he wouldn't want to talk with me. My intention for this project was never from a negative angle and even expressed by admiration for his work in my emails. After the shock wore off, I had to rely on "plan b" and try and speak to those most important around him. Emailing and calling got me only so far, so I decided I was going to show up at galleries and events where I thought he might be or individuals from his inner circle. I was finally able to make some traction when I was able to informally speak to Todd Gresley gallery director from Art on 5th. Todd said that if there was ever an artist to do a masters project on it was Jason Eatherly. He spoke about dealer interest in Eatherly's work, his first gallery show in 2017 with fellow street artist Dave Lowell, and Eatherly's 2018 solo gallery exhibit. Though our encounter was brief, it provided some insight in Eatherly's transition into the gallery. Todd mentioned that Eatherly was very humble and thankful for the opportunity to showcase his art on a larger scale. Todd mentioned during my visit that I needed to speak with Molly Maroney from

SprATX to get a real insiders advantage. Molly thankfully responded to my email and was willing to set up a formal interview. I was thankful for the opportunity to meet with her and the information that she provided which I will go into more detail later. My process and progress with this project have been challenging, but I feel I have a much broader understanding and respect for the street artist community in Austin, Texas and around the globe.

The question I set out to answer through this Capstone process was “How does the identity of the graffiti artist evolve or change once their art is taken off the streets, and can the artist still be recognized as a street artist once they transition into the fine art and business worlds?” Within these subsequent chapters, I have attempted to provide insight into the life and work of Jason Eatherly and what it means to him to be a graffiti and street artist. If historically graffiti art was performed by low income minority individuals where does Eatherly fit into this historical framework? Can he truly call himself a graffiti artist if he has no ties to what it meant to be a graffiti artist in the Bronx in the 1970s? Is he fighting for the same injustice brought upon those individuals who created a movement on moving museums? Could Eatherly be accused of cultural appropriation, or like Ben Davis says is Eatherly’s story apart of this idea of a “new wave” of street art? Eatherly grew up in the 1990s absorbed in white boy skater and BMX biking cultures in Wichita Kansas. These two “extreme” sports given that title by ESPN in 1996 with the creation of the X-Games was “a discursive marker of white male youth” says Emily Yochim author of Skate life: Re-imaging White Masculinity³. Like street art and graffiti today many artists are drawn to the craft for its extreme and dangerous nature, so its no

³ Yochim, 2009, online publication section 2.

surprise that Eatherly growing up on adrenaline and extreme acts for fun would look to graffiti and street art as an additional outlet for self-expression. Yochim points out in her piece that these two sports came from the streets and in 1996 were probably the only sports where you could get arrested. She also highlights that “skateboarding, in short, has experienced a discursive evolution from innocuous childhood game to rebellious youth.”⁴

In 2003, Alona Wartofky from The Washington Post covered a story entitled “Extreme Art” which showcased a skate boarding themed gallery show entitled “Session the Bowl” at Dietch Projects in SoHo. This show elevated skateboarding culture featuring art pieces and a live skateboarders skating “the bowl” reminiscent of a live art performance. This show was very similar to the graffiti art shows of today and provides an example of how this idea of street to gallery can be embraced in many diverse cultures and communities. It also highlights the relationships that can be formed like that of Jason Eatherly and Todd Gresley from Art of 5th. For Eatherly’s first solo show Gresley recognized Eatherly as a “independent public artist” and provided him the space to showcase his work on canvas and through installations. Rafael Schacter in his book *Ornament and Order* uses the term “independent public art” instead of graffiti art and points out that this type of art can range from the use of spray cans to urban installations and touches nearly every corner of the globe which is very true with skateboard culture. Skateboarding as a form of street art is part of a universal phenomenon and deserves to be recognized like other types of street art as a legitimate artistic expression of a cultural group and like graffiti and street artist skateboarders have their own cultural identity.

⁴ Yochim, 2009, online publication section 2.

Chapter 2

Jason's Story

"If you have fans, even a small amount build a relationship. It's very important!"-Jason Eatherly



(Photo Credit: www.Jasone.co)

Jason Eatherly is a self-proclaimed urban street culture artist. Eatherly started painting at the age of twelve in Wichita Kansas with the support of his equally talented mother who gave him the confidence to develop a craft of his own. In 2015, Complex.com highlighted Eatherly by including him in an article entitled “These young Austin artists will soon be household names.”

Eatherly is best known for his “Queen Eli” piece which features Queen Elizabeth with a tattooed neck wearing a

spray mask and can be seen all over Austin, Texas. Eatherly decided to call Austin home after recognizing the city for its “magnificent artistic features.”⁵ Jason points out that he uses the “Queen Eli” piece “as a symbol for what I do and a form of repetition to keep my fan base able to relate back to the same artist, and I do so by means of stickers, wheat paste, paint rollers, and spray paint.”⁶ Gino Barasa, the guest blogger for austinot.com, stated that Eatherly’s “Queen Eli” “may be the most recognizable single piece of street art in Austin today. It’s almost everywhere. You can hardly throw a paint can on the east side without hitting it on a dumpster, wall, stop sign, electrical box, or a car that’s been parked for more than a day”.⁷ Barasa also mentions that he was surprised to discover a common thread between the five Austin artists that he interviewed which was that “they simply feel the need to keep painting, even if no one appreciates it or knows who to give credit to.” Eatherly’s art addiction has turned into a career and is what I believe sets him apart from other Austin street artists. Eatherly is a dealer of his own branded



Artist

Statement:

Hi I'm Jason Eatherly, an urban street culture artist. I

was introduced to painting at the age of 12. With the confidence in my mother to keep things going, I've worked on interior & exterior art from mural scale to hand constructed canvases. I've done thousands of pieces and haven't kept one for myself. I feel as if I was put here to show others that they can dig really deep into whatever their heart desires. After traveling the midwest, Austin is the one place I can call home because of its magnificent artistic features!

⁵ www.austinartgarage.com, Artist statement: Jason Eatherly.

⁶ Howe, “These young Austin Artist will soon be household names.”

⁷ Barasa, “Behind the paint cans: Austin street art.”

goods such as t-shirts, stickers, cutouts, prints, and enamel pins which are available for purchase on his website www.jasone.co. He can also be seen around Austin displaying his ultimate branding accessory, a tattoo of his Queen Eli piece that covers his back.⁸

Spratx is the current agency that represents Eatherly, which “is a creative agency headquartered in Austin, Texas that offers a hand-selected network of artists and talent from all over the globe. As a family of street artists, muralists, and creative energies, [they] are dedicated to showcasing the power of New Contemporary art and to generating economic opportunities for artists”.⁹ Molly Maroney co-founder of SprATX shared with me the story of



how Spratx came to represent Eatherly in a recent interview. Maroney stated that she believed Eatherly had the talent, passion, and drive to turn his street art into a career. Maroney said that SprATX approached Eatherly about the idea of representation during the creation of a coffee table book of street art and Eatherly agreed to be their first represented artist. At that time Eatherly was not only painting commissioned murals and unsanctioned graffiti, but he was also elevating his off the street pieces into the fine art realm. Maroney said she recognized the opportunity for Eatherly’s work to be seen on a larger platform and contacted art director Todd Gresley at the local Austin gallery Art on 5th. Until then SprATX had been displaying works of Eatherly in their storefront gallery space and were available for purchase alongside paint

⁸ Photo credit: www.KnowATX.com

⁹ www.spratx.com, “about”.

materials and t-shirts. Maroney felt that Eatherly's pieces demanded a larger stage and could bring in more money for the artist.

Let's take a step back, how did Jason get to Austin, Texas? In a recent "Intimate Artist Talk" with Spratx, Eatherly opened up about the path he has taken to get to Austin and where he plans to go next. Eatherly spoke about his childhood in Kansas where he frequently moved around the state with his mother who her self-was an artist. Eatherly mentioned that he "never lived more than a year somewhere growing up," and recalled visiting local boutiques where his mother would sell her crafts. From a young age, Eatherly recognized the idea of entrepreneurship and being organized from his mother. He mentions how his mother pushed him to keep creating and growing up art was always around him. During his talk, he didn't want to mention anyone in particular that influenced his early years, but made references to his love for BMX, "being a good person," "trying [his] hardest," and being proud of his work as guiding principles that he lives by. After graduating from high school, Eatherly worked a local PAC SUN retail store where he created a side business for himself by painting Vans sneakers. Eatherly mentioned that customers would purchase the shoes for \$40.00 US dollars and he would in turn charge \$40.00 US dollars to paint the shoes. He had a system for painting the shoes and making sure they were ready for pick up by the end of the day. Eatherly utilized past experiences from high school art class where he first started painting to create mini works of art on the sneakers.

Leaving Kansas and making his way to Dallas, Texas Eatherly was actively looking for a gallery who would show a few pieces of his art and found himself in the middle of legal trouble after graffiti tagging a city-owned land sale billboard. During this time "Queen Eli" was born in 2012 while Eatherly was creating tattoo art for Dallas tattoo shops. Eatherly mentioned that he "never intended to brand her [he] just thought [he] would paint her and always loved a side

profile.” He also mentioned that he tried painting her first with a gas mask but decided on the spray mask. When asked about the inspiration for the Queen Eli piece Eatherly provided no reference to the “Stamps of Mass Destruction” created by Blacksmoke and James Cauty in 2003.¹⁰ These stamps also use the side profile of Queen Elizabeth wearing a gas mask and were created in response to chemical warfare threats placed upon London from Saddam Hussein.¹¹ Eatherly mentioned for all the work he creates he’s not ready to make a political message quite yet and is still trying to show his audience that he can paint. In 2013, Eatherly moved from Dallas with Sarah who he started dating in Dallas and would soon become his business manager. For the past nearly six years Eatherly has worked closely with Spratx through their Ignite program, The HOPE Outdoor Gallery, Art of 5th, and Austin Art Garage to create a name for himself in Austin and to show that he has an arsenal of abilities to create art on and off the street. This referenced intimate artist talk took place on the eve of Eatherly’s first solo gallery show exhibited at Art of 5th. One year prior, Eatherly held a combined street artist showcase with fellow street artist Dave Lowell entitled “Depth & Decay” also at Art on 5th.¹² His latest exhibition “Outside in” is reminiscent of his previous ideas and elements of decay from his first



show, but transforms them into a body of work that creates a space in the gallery that disrupts the norm. “By transforming salvaged materials and elevating them into works of art [while] Eatherly challenges the viewer to see past the surface erosion to the

¹⁰ Left, Sarah. “The Royal Mail stamps down on postage art”.

¹¹ <http://www.artrepublic.com>. “James Cauty Artist Biography”.

¹² <http://www.arton5th.com>. “Depth & Decay”.

beauty underneath,”¹³ Eatherly speaks about his inspiration for his latest show and references a recent trip to Marfa Texas. Eatherly goes on to say that the trip to Marfa illuminated his love for old car parts, the countryside, the desert, old phone booths, and the way the light reflects off the rust. He also mentions that he is attracted to architecture and wood, abstract and emotions, and pieces that “punch you in the face and give you a back rub at the same time.”

When asked what’s next for him and his art he spoke about purchasing and renovating an old school bus into a tiny home and traveling the country. He mentioned his first stop would be to visit his mom who recently had back surgery and made a comment that the bus would be “fueled” by his art, sales from his art that is. Eatherly also mentioned that on his travels wants to do more street art and still gets excited when he has a pocket full of stickers readily available for sticker slapping.

Eatherly has a strong online and social media presence that is closely guarded by himself and monitored by his girlfriend and manager Sarah. He also has a well laid out website where he deliberately categorizes his portfolio into Fine Art, Walls, and Videos. From my experience with this project, it appears that Eatherly is in full control of his image and messages. Various articles and websites all say the same things and messages appear to be elusive and guarded. After meeting Eatherly, I can say that he was gracious, humble, and open to providing additional input and feedback for my project something that I pleasantly surprised.



¹³ <http://www.arton5th.com>. ""

Chapter 3

Jason @ Work



(Photo Credit Given to Brandon Snow)

Jason's Instagram Threads of Thought

The snapshots below are a series of Instagram posts that either Eatherly posted directly to his Instagram account for his followers, or were parts of threads posted by the artist that were available for a short time and then no longer available to view. Most of the pictures I chose to include in this project are that of the later, temporary posts and can be interpreted as threads of consciousness from the artist himself. Eatherly who uses social media as the main way to communicate with his fans appears to be deliberate when selecting images to post. It also appears that his attention to detail through these photos highlights main points of identity for the artist. When I realized I was going to have a challenging time speaking with Eatherly directly, I turned to his social media account for insight on who Jason Eatherly is and how he is choosing to represent himself. Social media is a big part of the representation process for Eatherly and typically appears to be guarded and at times even elusive, but in these temporary Instagram posts, Eatherly appears to be more open which allows his followers an insiders look into his life. Eatherly treats his social media as an additional medium which has become part of his larger artistic portfolio and pays great attention to detail and form when posing online. I was surprised by what I was able to view and the different messages I was able to glean from the photos and felt these temporary posts provided me some of the insight I needed for this project. This series starts with photo number one which was posted on February 19, 2018, and is in sequential order. This series runs from February 19, 2018, to May 30, 2018, and these photos are only a sampling of the over 100 images that I captured through this process.

The photos that I chose to highlight for this series touch on themes important to Eatherly and are repeated throughout his work such as love, respect, hard work, dedication, collaboration, and community, and in this section, I wanted to dive a little deeper into my interpretation of the artist's message. In photo number two, Eatherly features an excerpt from Juxtapoz magazine where he strategically uses his hand to draw attention to part of the article that appears to mean the most to him and invites the reader to think about the challenges in recent street art. Eatherly displays part of the expert that illuminates the thought of street art being challenged by institutional authoritarianism and "Hipster" past times, but in reality, street art has the opportunity to be used as a tool to bring communities together and drive creativity. I thought this message was important to point out because I feel this is part of Eatherly's bigger artistic vision. Eatherly labels himself as the voice of the city in photo number fourteen which I also wanted to dive a little deeper into this meaning. Eatherly tends to be reserved, elusive, and exudes a certain mystic about him, so it was interesting to me that he felt the need to step up to be the voice for the city which came across as more arrogant than his normal humble demeanor, and made me question whether the city needed a voice. Is Eatherly saying he is the voice of the artist community in Austin? Is he stating that he is the voice for the marginalized? The voice for the disenfranchized?

Eatherly mentions in photo number twenty-eight that the effort put into his art is for the "culture" and leaving behind a gem for those who ride the same wave. In this reference to culture, Eatherly appears to reference back to community and creating an artistic legacy and space for like-minded individuals to feel empowered to express themselves creatively. From my interactions with Eatherly and from following his social media threads I think Eatherly's greater messages of love, respect, and hard work is the mark he wants to leave on the Austin community.

Eatherly is in the process of taking his fiancée Sarah and business on to the open road so that he can continue to perfect his craft and show more audiences that he can paint. Eatherly mentioned in his intimate artist talk that he is only thirty years old and that he is still trying to prove to people he can paint.



Photo #1

Posted on February 19, 2018

Highlights the installation of a four-part Queen Eli piece into a collectors home back in 2016.



Photo #2

Posted on March 9, 2018

Photo #2 showcases an excerpt from Juxtapoz magazine that Eatherly has strategically used his hand to draw attention to part of the article that meant the most to him, and invites the reader to think about the challenges in recent street art.



Photo #3

Posted on March 9, 2018



Photo #4

Posted on March 9, 2018

This photo highlights his love for sticker slapping and finding creative places to put a Queen Eli up on the go like here at the gas station.



Photo #5

Posted on March 9, 2018

Eatherly gets his fans excited with a sneak peak of work for his upcoming solo show on May 12, 2018. This is a first look for his social media followers at his fine art work.



Photo # 6

Posted on March 10, 2018

Eatherly has made many references to his mother who encouraged him to keep painting at a young age.



Photo #7

Posted on March 13, 2018

First reference to his sister made by Eatherly here praising her for her Kansas plate design.

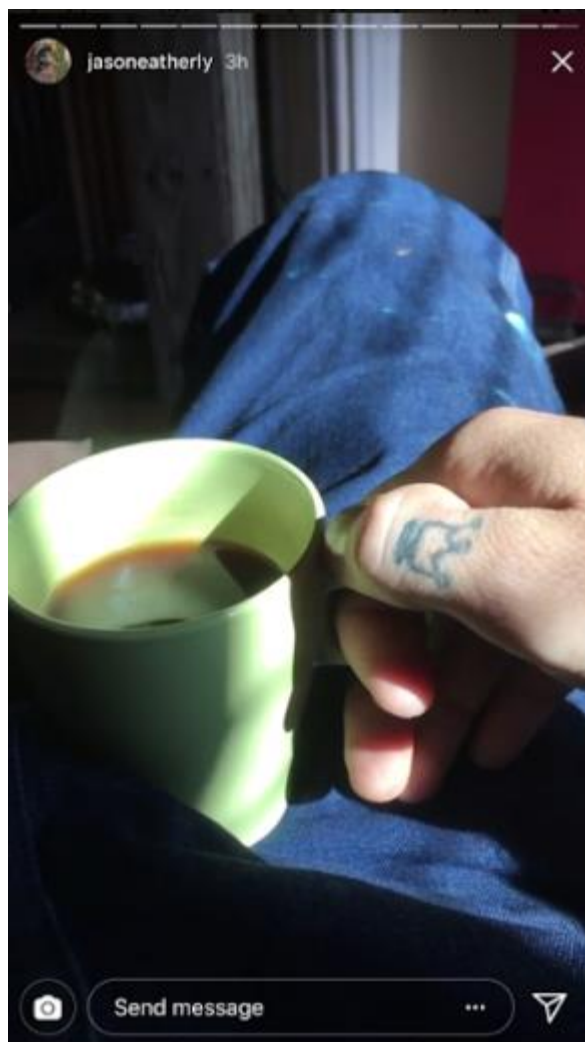


Photo #8

Posted on March 13, 2018

Eatherly takes a quick coffee break from his studio work and highlights the tattoo on his thumb which is the SprATX crown. Is Eatherly trying to show his loyalty to SprATX through this snapshot?

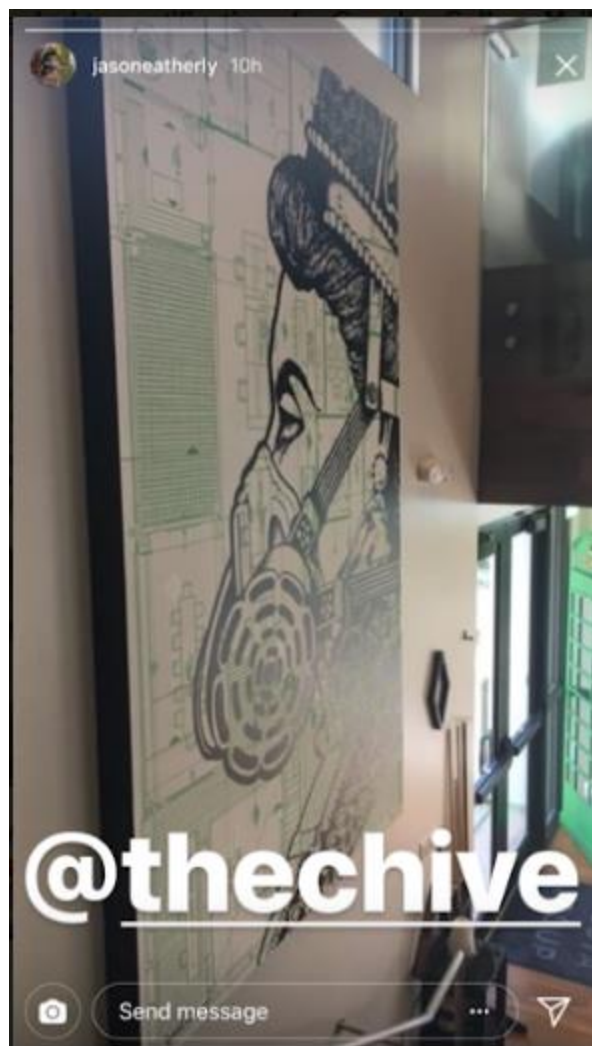


Photo #9

Posted on March 14, 2018

Eatherly Shows off his large Queen Eli piece which was created for The Chive Austin headquarters office.



Photo #10

Posted on March 14, 2018

Eatherly posts about the closing of the Hope Out Door Gallery which finally closed in May 2018. Eatherly put up a large Queen Eli piece which can be seen here in honor of the closing. Other local and SprATX artists participated in the closing events as well.



Photo #11

Posted on March 15, 2018

Eatherly speaks of artistic respect in light of the H+M lawsuit regarding the utilization of a street artists piece without giving the artist credit or compensation. This does bring up a good point that if a piece is true illegal graffiti is the artist still entitled to acknowledgement?

Photo #12

Posted on March 17, 2018

Eatherly provides another sneak peek into his upcoming solo show where he will focus heavily on finding the beauty from within and looking past the dirt and decay.



Photo #13

Posted on April 1, 2018

Eatherly working in his studio showing off his pencil drawings.



Photo #14

Posted on April 7, 2018

In this photo Eatherly states his claim as being the voice for his city. From his statement he sees himself as a role model and problem solver.



Photo #15

Posted on April 8, 2018

Eatherly uses his Queen Eli piece as a method of branding which he also sells on his website for his fans.

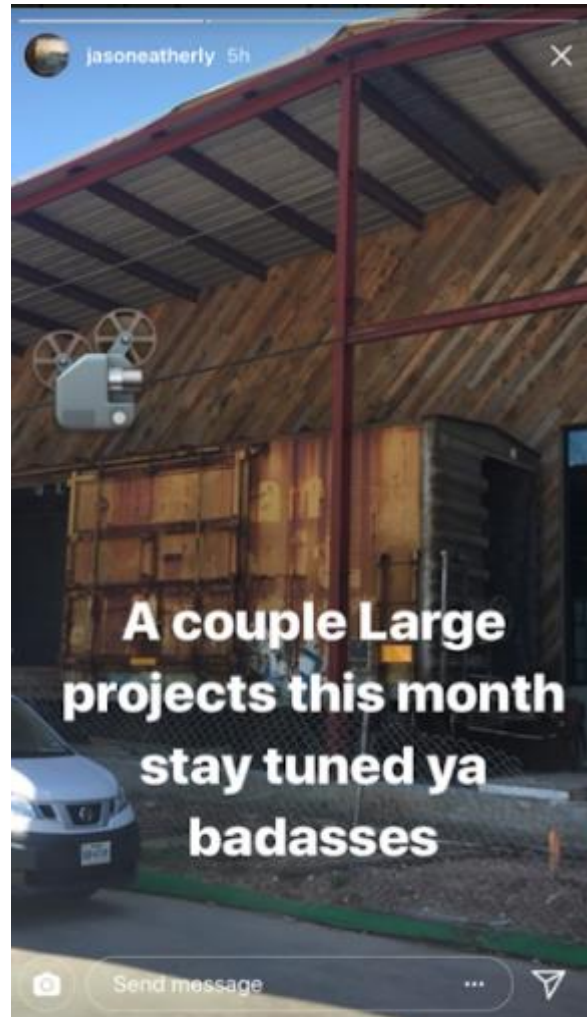


Photo #16

Photo posted on April 11, 2018

Eatherly tries to keep his social media followers engaged and intrigued by posting sneak peeks attention grabbing snapshots.



Photo # 17

Posted on April 11, 2018

Eatherly speaks of demanding work and dedication as well as the time and commitment involved in putting together a gallery show.



Photo #18

Posted on April 11, 2018

Eatherly typically posts positive messages on his social media encouraging his followers to keep going and enjoy the ride. This post also references classic graffiti block style and can be traced back to original graffiti train taggers in New York City. Original artist of the piece shown is unknown.



Photo # 19

Posted on April 12, 2018

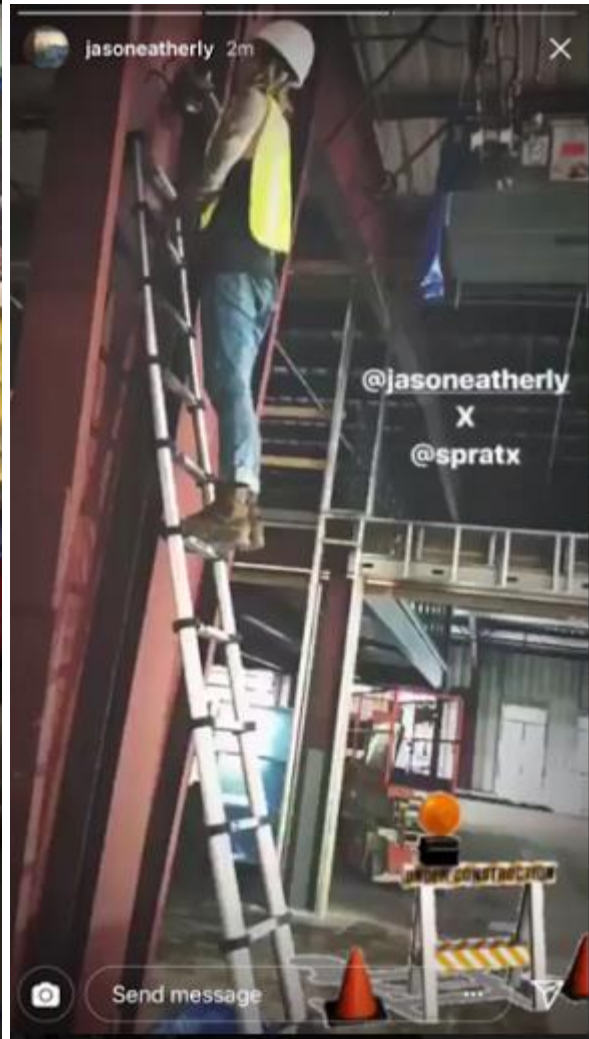


Photo #20

Posted on April 13, 2018

Another sneak peek from Eatherly about an upcoming project with SPIN. This picture also highlights this collaboration was sponsored by SprATX.



Photo #21

Posted on April 29, 2018

Eatherly in the studio working on his upcoming collaboration with SPIN.

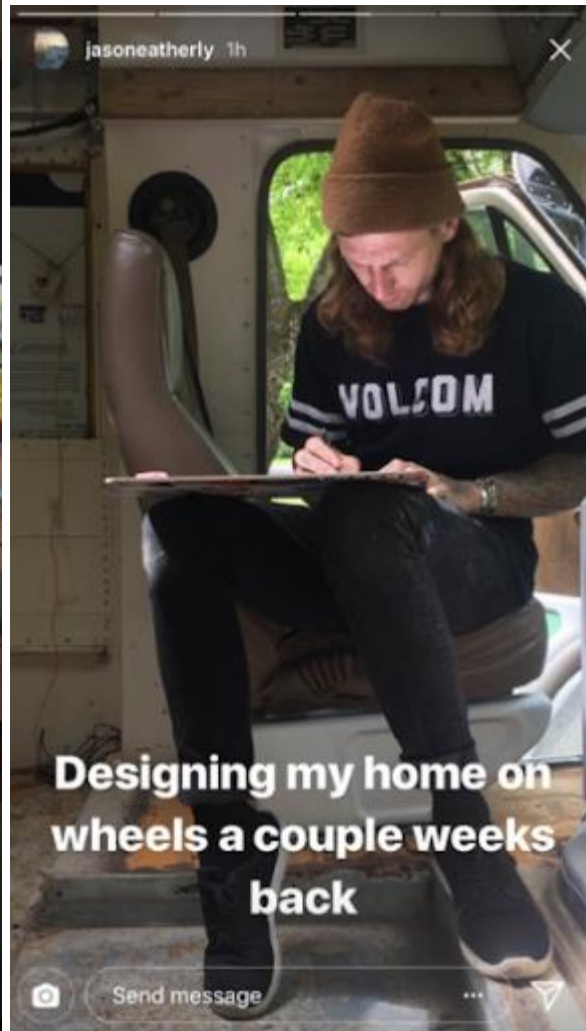


Photo #22

Posted on April 29, 2018

Eatherly working on his personal side project which will become his tiny home on wheels "fueled by art" as the artist says.



Photo # 23

Posted on April 30, 2018

Eatherly grew up on white boy skate boarding and BMX biking culture, as well as art at school and at home which aided in his adaption of traditional black and Latino graffiti culture.



Photo #24

Posted on April 30, 2018

When he isn't sporting his Queen Eli back tattoo he has a queen on the back of his jacket or vest. Eatherly uses the Queen Eli piece to her full branding potential. Eatherly also has a love for trains and mentioned that he always wanted to ride a train. during his intimate artist talk speaks about his opportunity to hop aboard and ride one out of town. It was not clear if he was first trying to tag this train.



Photo #25

Posted on May 5, 2018

Hand painted queen piece showing that he can really paint which has also been a reoccurring theme for Eatherly proving that he can paint on and off the streets.



Photo # 26

Posted on May 7, 2018

Lounging on a tagged jet ski in the middle of the city.



Photo # 27

Posted on May 7, 2018

Eatherly posing next to a piece thrown up on a train by artist Haze. This snapshot again highlights Eatherly's messages of positivity.



Photo #28

Posted on May 8, 2018

This snapshot features a BMX ramp and Eatherly's words about creating a culture of likeminded individuals and striving to leave behind a legacy.



Photo #29

Posted on May 12, 2018

The installation for the solo show at Art on 5th

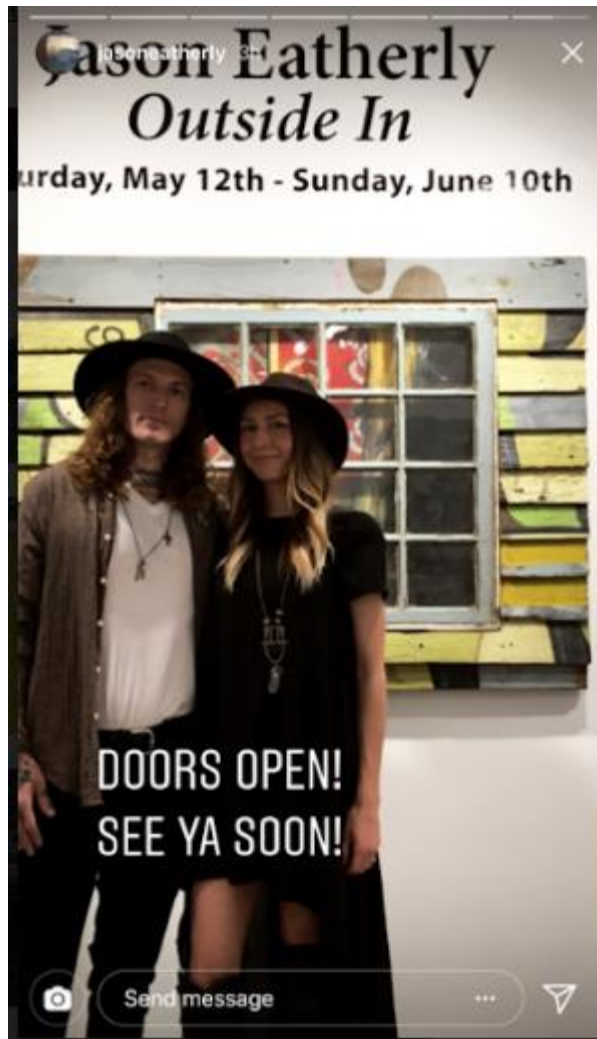


Photo #30

Posted on May 12, 2018

Eatherly utilizing social media to reach his fans about the opening of his show.



Photo #31

Posted on May 12, 2018

Eatherly and Sarah thanking their fans and followers for a successful first solo show.



Photo #32

Posted on May 30, 2018

Eatherly showing off his large piece for the collaboration with SPIN ping pong bar and SprATX. This photo showcases his city-wide presences and how new businesses in the area want to display local artist work. SPIN set out to create a truly local atmosphere in their bar and wanted to include touches of Austin which includes a heavy presence of street art.

Chapter 4



Photo Credit given to SprATX

SprATX has been an important part of Jason Eatherly's transition into the gallery and has helped create relationships between Eatherly and local gallery and business owners. These collaborations have helped Eatherly land large scale jobs around the city and has helped his Queen Eli piece become one of the most recognizable pieces around the city. SprATX is an artist network, agency, supply shop, gallery and artist community center headquartered in Austin, Texas. Spratx offers a hand-selected network of artists for hire from Austin and around the country. Their mission as a family of street artists, muralists, and creative energies is that they are dedicated to showcasing the power of New Contemporary art and to generate economic opportunities for artists. "Since 2013, SprATX has become the go-to resource that connects those in need of professional and experienced talent to seasoned and emerging artists both locally and abroad".¹⁴ SprATX states that their commitment to their artists, clients, and exceptional quality of work has built an unparalleled reputation with proven success in creating, developing and launching projects and programs for brands and clients in every industry. They also promote each client and artist they work with, while simultaneously supporting the creative community at large.



"Dairy MAX worked with SprATX on playground beautification projects in Arlington, Texas. Erik and Heath were phenomenal, and we are so proud of the results. The new playgrounds have changed the way the students play, and the way the community interacts with the playground. Thank you SprATX, for helping kids and their communities learn the importance of good nutrition and physical activity."

ESSENCE RILEY

Dairy MAX

SprATX is growing fast and has artists in fourteen states, and at their downtown Austin location, they feature many of those artists in their Supply Shop/ SprATX Gallery. SprATX says The Supply Shop is a place where they can provide access to "low-cost urban art supplies and

¹⁴ www.spratx.com/about

showcase the artwork created by emerging and established artists using those same supplies.”¹⁵

SprATX releases a quarterly apparel line which is designed in-house with collaborations from many of their resident artists. This multifaceted organization finds it imperative to give back to the community in which it supports by utilizing their “footprint and expertise” by spreading their love for art to local schools, charities, non-profits, community members, and local businesses. SprATX says that since Art has no boundaries their clients are as diverse as their artists, and they strive to build lasting relationships by pushing the boundaries of traditional methods and media to exceed their client’s goals successfully.

There have been many positive articles written about SprATX, and while I too believe it is a community building, relationship forming, positive placemaking organization I did want to point out that they are for-profit. I think SprATX is providing opportunities for artists they might have never had otherwise, but SprATX does decide which artists they chose to work with and represent. Artist interested in their non-profit residency program go through a selection process before being “accepted” into the SprATX family. This residency program is the only non-profit section of SprATX that I am aware of. Once an artist completes their residency program, they are represented by the organizations for profit management team. There benefits for artists being associated with a for profit agency such as the organizations eagerness to turn a profit for the artist and themselves. The organization may have additional funds available for marketing and branding. Being selective also has its benefits by creating a team of artists who elevate their image and who could potentially attract more clients.

¹⁵ www.spratx.com/about and includes photo of quote from their website

The Ignite program is SprATX's non-profit residency program. "Ignite serves as a newly created platform to equip selected artists with the support and tools necessary to kindle their art careers to new levels. It is [their] continued mission to help sustain and evolve alongside the Austin art scene and Ignite is an



expression of that conviction. SprATX's Ignite program is a fiscally sponsored project of the Austin Community Foundation" and is a 501(c) (3) public charity.¹⁶ The Ignite program welcomes essay submissions describing why the individual would benefit from the program and requests that artists interested in their residency program commit to an intensive month-long deep dive in which they dedicate much of their time to their body of work. Artists like Jason Eatherly that are chosen to be apart of the Ignite program are provided benefits such as:

- 24 hour access to studio space
- mentoring on pricing of their work
- a "crash course" on the basics of the business of art
- information on protecting their art and interests
- developing contracts and client agreements
- social media promotion and education
- video production and education
- a featured artist spotlight interview on the SprATX blog

¹⁶ www.spratx.com/resources

- discounted artist supplies
- “hands-on guided session in the SprATX workshop.”
- digital arts mentoring
- “mural production boot camp.”
- professional bids and proposals information
- features on the SprATX live streaming channel
- a SprATX hosted gallery showing of the artists progress
- contract work opportunity review¹⁷

Molly Maroney and Heath Speakman are the co-owners and founders of SprATX and have helped to foster a creative buzz around street art in the Austin area. From my experience with this project over the past few



months, I quickly realized that Molly was the person I needed to reach out to if I was going to uncover the multiple layers of Jason Eatherly and the Austin artists community. Everyone that I spoke to about my project all told me the same thing “You gotta call Molly,” so that’s what I did and was eventually able to sit down with her at the SprATX office for an interview on April 6, 2018. Molly is a University of Texas alumna and grew up like Jason Eatherly with an artistic mother. Molly mentioned that her mother was a street artist in the late 1970s who created murals but stopped after they fell out of fashion. She walked me through how SprATX was created out of the desire to create a coffee table book of street art, and made me question whether SprATX is the creative glue that holds the Austin artist community together?

Molly said the mission has always been to provide opportunities to artists who were disenfranchised by institutions but are now franchising themselves by taking their art to the next

¹⁷ www.spratx.com/resources

level. In our interview, she uncovers how she came to know Jason Eatherly and through his work and humbleness she knew he was just the right artist to be first represented artist by SprATX.

How does this collaboration work, you may wonder? Clients who reach out to SprATX directly can request certain artists or can be provided an artist to complete a project. If the client works directly through SprATX, then SprATX will negotiate a price on behalf of the artist and take a portion of the profits. I was not able to find out how much is taken by SprATX. The benefit for the artist are access to studio space and resources through their non-profit Ignite program; large-scale deals with corporations like Bud light and South by South West which is hosted every spring in Austin, and artist rights protection such as exploitation and material rights.

I believe that Eatherly chose to be sponsored by SprATX because he was looking for opportunities when he came to Austin. Eatherly is business savvy and appears to have multiple projects in the works to earn money and to fall back on. I also think he may have seen SprATX as a community and family of artists where he could contribute to the greater whole. Eatherly never expressed why he joined SprATX but based on themes he appears to stand for I was able to come to my own conclusion.

SprATX is a big part of Eatherly's art world, and with his dual identities on the street and in the gallery SprATX has helped him turn a single image into a career. Howard Becker's book entitled Art Worlds originally published in 1982 describes an artist's art world which outlines how multiple entities come together to shape art collectively. Eatherly's art world consists of the Austin street artist community, Art on 5th, his business manager, family, Austin Art Garage, local suppliers, consumers and fans, and collectors. I also found it interesting that Becker references Paul Hirsch in his book who in 1972 used the term Culture Industries to refer to "profit-seeking firms producing cultural product for national distribution," and in a way, this reminded me of

SprATX. SprATX assists in the production of cultural products by earning a profit from their artists and aims for national distribution with artists painting in fourteen states. This can be seen as a benefit for being represented by a for profit agency by being provided the opportunity for national distribution of their product.

I have noticed over this last year that Eatherly has been more selective with the events or jobs he participates in that are affiliated with SprATX. There doesn't appear to be any ill feelings, but I think it shows that he is ready to break off on his own. Eatherly's latest Art Bus project will allow him the freedom to travel and do art and sticker slap where ever he pleases. This departure is paving the way for the next up and coming artist like local female street artist ZUZU, who has also completed SprATX's Ignite program and interviews each artist featured by SprATX for the organizations blog.

One thing that I found to be interesting through my research is that there is no formal interview with Jason Eatherly, and when I mentioned this at SprATX to Erik Ross who is the production manager, he appeared equally surprised. The fact that Eatherly has no formal interview may speak to the idea of Eatherly taking great care at cultivating his image. It also appears from my research that he avoids probing questions and sticks to the same set of answers for many of his interviews. All the interviews featured on the SprATX blog give wonderful insight into the mind of the artist. These interviews address political and cultural concerns, high points and low points for the artists, and dig deep to tap into the core identity of the artist.

"Beauty Lies in the Imperfections" — Kristin Freeman



Artist Kristen Freeman was interviewed for the SprATX blog in January 2018 and is considered one of the leading female visual artists in Austin, Texas. SprATX says that Freeman is spreading her messages of love, female empowerment, and inspiration with the world. Freeman says that,

“The human face is so intriguing because it holds so much information beyond its obvious form and function. Subtle movements give away true feelings. But what if the only image we have of a subject is one that has been captured in a snapshot, just an instance frozen in time? How do we truly know them? I think about how thoughts can be hidden behind a smile or a stoic face. Each viewer has their own perception of who the subject is but who are they really? What is their life really like? My work is an exploration of the contrasting inner/outer Selves in an attempt to find one’s most authentic Self. To do so, I must discover the story within. Yes, it’s a painted portrait, but it’s more than just an instance. Do you see them? See them? I challenge the viewer to look a little closer. After a year and a half of travel on the open road and deep reflection, I now set off to paint the many amazing women in my life, those who have inspired and intrigued me – the kind, passionate and fearless.”

Freeman who featured Jason Eatherly in her most recent gallery show displayed a life size cutout of Eatherly holding spray paint cans. Freeman’s passion towards capturing moments in time and

looking past the surface to unveil the beauty within is very reminiscent of Etherly's most recent gallery exhibit where he to invites the reader to look past the dirt and decay to find inner beauty.

SprATX: Share why you love Austin, TX and how it's influenced your art career. What do you think makes the Austin art scene so special?

Freeman: I always wanted to live in Austin. It's completely and utterly different than any other city in Texas and is the **ONLY** place that I consistently feel like I can be myself 100%. Austin is open to the "weird," creative, and no one cares about trying to conform, in fact, it's the opposite. Creatives are celebrated here, the art scene is blowing up, and the city is openly embracing its own local artists. This supportive community enables artists to thrive. I also love nature and the outdoors, and Austin has so many options!

SprATX: Explain your experience in the SprATX Ignite Studio Program.

Freeman: I really love Spratx and all that they've done for the studio program. It's really nice to come into my studio, which is currently next to Lucas Aoki, a good friend of mine and have a place to be creative outside of my house. The Spratx team is super encouraging, open to new ideas, and is always ready to help out when needed. I'm very thankful for the opportunity and support!

SprATX's archive of interviews provided wonderful insight and allowed me the opportunity to gather data on a wide range of street artists for this project. Kristen Freeman displays a similar positive message in her work to that of Jason Eatherly, and while these artists only provide two perspectives on street art in Austin Texas, other artists display messages of social justice and feminism. For example, artist Lucas Aoki paints about issues related to the water crisis around the world and draws on inspiration from nature, and female artist group ATX Gals who create art that encourages other women to create and prosper.¹⁸ From these interviews it can be seen that the artists in Austin Texas present a wide range of messages and interests in their art work.

¹⁸ [Http://www.spratx.com/blog](http://www.spratx.com/blog)

Chapter 5

Conclusion



I embarked on this journey with a set of ideas of what I hoped I would discover through this project, but what I learned was much more. This project is about identity shifts, communities, creating a business, and staying humble through it all. Artist transitions to the gallery is nothing new, but I think in many areas it is still a relatively new idea for the gallery goer to experience the outside brought in. Jason Eatherly's story and transition is something special, and his dual identity approach is different than most artists I have researched. Eatherly exudes this persona of a badass street artist, but he is a soft-spoken, community-focused kind soul who is in control of his image and artistic story. Eatherly's transition into the gallery and the fine art realm appears to be part of his plan all along.



Ben Davis's idea of a new wave of street art highlights a different path for artists looking to make a career out of street art. This path is different from the graffiti pioneers who left a mark on their neighborhood because they had something to say and needed an outlet for the social injustice they were facing. Margo Thompson in her piece American Graffiti says that in the gallery tags become trademarks and "writers" like Eatherly no longer create for themselves but a larger public audience when they

transition to the gallery. The idea of artistic compromise has been a main question that I have asked through this project and whether Eatherly is compromising or changing his work to appeal to a different audience in the gallery. Through my research, Eatherly has made comments such as he is “not saying anything political yet” and that he tried to put together a body of work for his latest show that would appeal to the general public. From my observations, I think that his message might not be politically driven, but he has a lot to say about finding the beauty within. I



was surprised by his use of oils within his new paintings, his attention to detail, and ultimately think that he had an idea for the show and he ran with it void of outside influences. His latest show was a mix of various forms of his

Queen Eli piece and fine art paintings, and from an outsider's point of view, I would have thought he would have picked on or the other to showcase. Either the mix media pieces highlighting the Queen or his fine art pieces but not both. This mix of both types of art capitalized the point that he made during his intimate artist talk which was that he is still trying to prove to people that he can paint and wanted to display a wide range of his abilities.

From his high school days in art class to his many art-related side hustles Eatherly knew early on that to be successful, he would need to identify a path, a message, and a plan to gain as

much exposure as possible. I think what intriguing is that he has managed to keep one foot in each sphere straddling the private and the public. Eatherly has one foot in the gallery and the other on the street and appears to straddle both worlds at any given moment. Eatherly appears to do this by having a firm grasp on his image, story, and the way he communicates with his fans through his social media. From my research, I ultimately think Eatherly is a natural businessman instilled in him from his mother with an undeniable talent for creating art. Even after the success of his first solo gallery show, he appeared eager to get back to the streets with a pocket full of stickers and the freedom to slap them up where ever he feels. I felt from interactions with him that he had a burning desire to get back to the streets to create and live on the edge of risk and reality.

Looking ahead to the future and why is this information important? Hans Abbing says in his piece “Why are artists poor?” that artists are like magicians. Their artistic illusions captivate audiences and make them think twice. These illusions and perceptions of risk are even more relatable in street artists. These pieces, tags, and stickers thrown up in the dead of night are mystical illusions on the street that can make the average individual stop and take notice. I believe it is this illusion that captivated the attention of SprATX, Art on 5th, and collectors which has helped propel Eatherly’s career. Many street and graffiti artists are drawn to the risk involved whether that be legal or illegal and many artists are addicted to the rush of excitement. Abbing also says “Metaphorically speaking, the artist is a magician. Actually, they are a pseudo-magicians; they only pretend that they can perform magic. It looks like they have access to supernatural powers, but they do not they create illusions”.¹⁹ I think this artistic street illusion is part of the allure and appeal of street art. Street artists first capture the attention of the everyday

¹⁹ Abbing, Hans, 2002, page 30.

citizens and then the attention of the collectors and gallery owners, but for many artists, this illusion is a way to tell a story for themselves and their communities.

I feel there is a cultural and community need to embrace all artists. To allow individuals to express themselves how they see fit through collaboration and inclusivity. Street art is just one medium that can drive positive change in the lives of its community members and can also help raise questions and concerns for those who feel unheard. I think there should be more organization like Spratx in the for profit and non-profit sectors in Austin Texas, and more inclusion of street art into cities cultural plans. I believe these



organizations could provide additional resources and could include additional artists that may have not been chosen by organizations like SprATX. I also think there is opportunity with these organizations to work more with local schools to feature street artists as careerists, entrepreneurs, and opportunities to show the possibilities a career in this field could offer. Organizations like Graffiti Heart based in Northeast Ohio that focuses on creating education partners with institutions such as Cleveland Institute of Art. Their Pre- College program helps redirect youth from graffiti vandalism to commissioned street art projects. It also helps provide scholarships to aspiring artists and strives to change the perception of street art for community members by

showcasing street art to beautify local neighborhoods.²⁰ PSA, Positive Street Art, is another non-profit organization based in Nashua New Hampshire that aims to inspire passion for the urban arts. PSA connects with many local after-school programs to teach urban art to children, and in 2011 launched a program centered on urban dance workshops. PSA's mission is to create safe, clean, healthy, violence-free, life-enhancing communities utilizing a positive approach to urban art.²¹ Organizations like these can aid in the overall sustainability of street art by promoting a sense of community through street art-based programs and resources for artists.

For Jason Eatherly, he is embarking on a tiny home journey where he and his fiancé Sarah will travel the country to discover one blank wall at a time. It was a pleasure to ultimately meet Jason Eatherly, to hear his story, and to tell him why I chose to study his work. It was eye-opening to discover that he was creating fine art pieces before he ever showed in a gallery all while making a name for himself as a graffiti artist. His dual identities appear to have never threatened his street "cred" or considered him to be a sellout, and it appears that he has lived on the edge of two cultural spheres for many years.

At the end of Eatherly's solo gallery show, many fans and collectors left with purchases from the show and smiles on their faces. The crowd was mixed with friends, fans, and other local street artists. One family mentioned they attended the opening just to have the opportunity to purchase a piece from the artist, while avid gallery opening patrons appeared to be thrilled to experience Eatherly's work in a gallery setting. Overall the opening appeared to be a success and Eatherly looked very pleased when he left for the evening. I look forward to seeing what the future has in store for Eatherly and to see if he continues to show in galleries and paint on the

²⁰ [Http://www.graffitiheart.org](http://www.graffitiheart.org)

²¹ [Http://www.positivestreetart.org](http://www.positivestreetart.org)

street or if he decides one over the other. Eatherly can aid in the sustainability of street art by continuing to encourage other artists to keep going and painting. Eatherly's plan to travel the United States could also aid in the sustainability of street art by bringing his messages and his story to other cities, touching the lives of other artists, and bringing awareness about street art to different communities.

Where is street art headed in the future? There is a real concern that street art could fall out of public interest and makes me question whether street art is a viable and sustainable form of art. Molly Maroney from SprATX mentions that her mother was a street artist in the late 1970s who created murals but stopped after they fell out of fashion. Is street art just a vulnerable trendy past time or does it have the support and momentum to keep attracting new artists and captivating new communities? The sustainability of street art in the galleries is also up for debate and makes me question whether galleries will continue to feature street artists in the future. Can artists maintain dual identities in the gallery and on the street like Jason Eatherly and what does this mean for the integrity of the form if it lives in two spheres? These questions create a continued dialogue about street art and graffiti that I believe should be further researched to help anticipate and sustain street art for future generations.

Chapter 5

Literature Review



1. Ben Davis, 9.5 Theses on Art and Class, 2013.

Chapter eight, “Beneath Street Art, the Beach” provided me a sense of understanding to a new wave of street art. Ben Davis’s idea that street art and graffiti grew up along side each other versus evolving from one another illuminated the idea that Jason Eatherly appears to have grown up inspired by this new wave of street art. Eatherly with no direct ties to early graffiti culture appears to have adapted this entrepreneurial spirit and graffiti form like those early pioneers of the street art movement. I think this is particularly alive in Jason Eatherly’s work especially in his new solo gallery show “Outside in” where he transforms tossed aside materials into elevated art as well as in his positive messages and repetitious use of his Queen Eli piece.

2. Howard Becker, Art Worlds, 2008.

Art Worlds is an examination of Art as collective action from a sociological lens. What is especially interesting to this project is that it brings together all the elements that make up an artist’s network. From suppliers, dealers, critics, consumers, to other artists in the community. This Capstone examines just that, the cultural community network of one artist whose dual identities on the street and in the gallery helped him turn a single image into a career. Jason’s art world consists of the Austin street artist community, Spratx, Art on 5th, business manager, family, Austin Art Garage, local suppliers, consumers and fans, and collectors. Becker says that all these parts “complete a picture of the entire cooperating network that

radiates out from the work in question.”²² The term Culture Industries appears in Becker’s book and references Paul Hirsch who in 1972 used the term to refer to “profit-seeking firms producing cultural product for national distribution.” This idea made me think of SprATX, and while I believe they are in this business to provide resources and better the lives of those involved with their organization they are still a for profit agency. They are assisting in the production and sale of an adapted form of graffiti/ cultural pieces around the country.

3. Janice Rahn, *Painting without Permission Hip -Hop Graffiti Subculture*, 2002.

Janice Rahn is the Assistant Professor of Art Education at the University of Lethbridge in Canada. Rahn interviewed ten Hip-Hop graffiti writers to discover patterns and themes associated with public space and community. Rahn chose to study graffiti as a way to “bridge the gap between theory and practice, and to address the critical issues which confront the education of youth today.”²³ Rahn also states that youth today are in a constant struggle to construct not only personal identities but also communities that they want to live within. I found this to be particularly important for this capstone because as we examine Jason Eatherly’s path his passion for creating art started in high school. He also recognized the need for additional artist resources and chose to leave the community that he belonged to in Kansas. Eatherly does mentioned that he did move around a lot as a child so maybe that was the reason to find a place where he could establish himself, and he

²² Becker, pg. 35

²³ Rahn, page 10

thought that Dallas, Texas would be that place. Eatherly hoped Dallas would provide opportunities for him to sell his art in galleries, but when that didn't pan out, he chose Austin, Texas to reside. Eatherly was not only searching for opportunities but also to belong to an artist community. Eatherly has mentioned before that he chose Austin for "magnificent artistic features" and artist community.

4. Margo Thompson, *American Graffiti*, 2009.

Margo Thompson gives a brief history in her book on *American Graffiti* showcasing how artists like Jean- Michael Basquiat, Keith Haring, and Kenny Scharf began their careers writing or tagging New York City subway cars before transitioning into established neighborhoods with gallery spaces like in SOHO, on 57th Street, and at the Basel Art Fair. She goes on to explain how there was a boom in sought after graffiti art pieces making their way into galleries in the 1980s but quickly fell out of fad a few years later when consumers turned their attention to new trends. Thompson illuminated a valid point that I have questioned through this capstone process and wonder is history repeating its self? If the transition from the street to the gallery is nothing new is this recent resurgence of street art here to stay?

This piece also points out how many art historians and critics have failed to give early subway taggers the sustained attention or "street cred" they deserve, or how the New York Art market in the 1980s helped create a subculture, vernacular art form produced for the most part by radical and ethnic minorities says, Thompson. Thompson's book highlights many great points for this capstone project and

allowed me to understand where Graffiti art has been and where the idea of cultural sustainability could take it.

5. Rafael Schacter, *Ornament and Order*, 2014.

This piece looks at the role of graffiti in gang culture regarding idea of visual pollution and places it in a wider historical, political, and aesthetic context. Schacter uses the term independent public art instead of graffiti art and points out that this type of art can range from the use of spray cans to urban installations and now touches nearly every corner of the globe. Schacter ethnographically explores both the image and its mode of construction which is the ornament and the order. Schacter highlights one artist named Nano from Madrid Spain who throws up the image of a squid all over the city. Nano refers to the “Choquitos” or squid as remnants of himself, and “never for self-promotion, but for self-expression.” Nano also mentions his need to get back to the streets to put up one of his Choquitos even when he is working on larger projects or in the gallery. Nano’s thought process is very similar to how Jason Eatherly feels about creating art. Eatherly has mentioned in many articles that he has a need deep within his being to create art. Eatherly has also mentioned that though he enjoys installations and gallery work he too needs to get back out to streets with a pocket full of stickers to put up his Queen. Eatherly too found a image that spoke to him, but unlike Nano Eatherly was looking for a way to self-promote and to create an image that would allow his fans to refer back to him.

6. William Wimsatt, *Bomb the suburbs: Graffiti, Race, Freight-Hopping, and the search for Hip Hops Moral Center*, 2008.

I found this book to provide an interesting insiders perspective about Hip Hop and graffiti for my Capstone. Wimsatt starts by expressing his concerns for what he believes is the problems with today's Hip Hop. He feels passionate that Hip Hop is confusing these days because rappers aren't trying to be role models, rappers act as if they don't owe anyone anything, and they aren't rapping for a greater cause. Wimsatt believes that "Rap music's identity crisis is a reflection of our own individual identity crisis."²⁴ Wimsatt references the mid-1990's when rap music spoke about issues of love, children, political issues, money, emotional security, employment, and being a good person. These points made me question if many still believe that Hip Hop and Graffiti are intertwined today is graffiti art having an identity crisis as well?

In this book, I enjoyed the piece where he responds to a fan letter. Wimsatt goes into great detail to outline the dos and donts of graffiti artists to a young boy from Parker, Colorado. A few key points were not to paint over someone else's piece unless you receive permission or they are dead in which case if you knew the writer you can re-trace the piece to keep their memory alive. He also points out that "permission walls" (or my experience in Dever with "Please call to tag" signs) are done only for money or if you have something to say in that location. He goes on to say the reason behind this thinking is because "people who seem like they are

²⁴ Wimsatt, page 10.

being nice by giving you permission walls are really exploiting the hell out of you.”²⁵

7. Paul 107, *All City: The Book about Taking Space*, 2003.

Growing up Paul 107 had many questions surrounding graffiti artists, and his simplest question was Why? Why would individuals risk so much to tag? Tags were all over his city, and they inspired him to ask what motivated people to want to bomb or tag their city. He felt that many artists in his neighborhoods treated tagging and throwing up like a job but with no real financial gain. He quickly identified that their goal must be to take all the space, and believes getting out into the streets to “tag” “bomb” or to “throw up” is a pure form of art. He also talks about he believes the street side to an artists business is the part they don’t talk about in galleries, and crafting great street art is a marathon, not a sprint. I found this piece to be interesting for this project because even though Paul 107 says there is no real way to make a “how to guide” for graffiti bur this book is exactly what he has created. He touches on all aspects of the business of graffiti from how to chose a name, the logistics of how to get a piece up, crews, cross-outs, using gloves, creating paint colors, to even creating excuses when faced with questioning. Number two of his handy six excuse guide reminded me of Jason Eatherly’s run-in with the law in Dallas, Texas. Number two states “just because (insert corporation name here) has the money to put all these billboards up and I’m broke doesn’t mean I shouldn’t be allowed to do

²⁵ Wimsatt, page 57.

the same thing.”²⁶ Eatherly chose to paint over a state-sponsored land sale billboard which cost him legal fines, but no confirmed jail time. I believe that this run-in with the law was one reason Eatherly chose to seek out a different city after moving to Dallas.

8. Hans Abbing, *Why Are Artists Poor? The Exceptional Economy of the Arts*, 2002.

In his 2002 piece Hans Abbing explore why artists are poor if the economy of the arts is exceptional. He explains hows artists operate their arts successfully in the marketplace but have a “natural” affinity with gift giving, rather than with commercial exchange, and I think this is especially true in graffiti art. Artist like Jason Eatherly believe that they have a natural need to create even if no one appreciates their work or recognizes who the artist is even though supplies like stickers, paint, and posters aren't free. Throughout this project, I have raised questions about authenticity and Abbing touches on the topic of authenticity by saying that authenticity is “a fingerprint of the artist somehow manages to creep into the work of art, its style, the signature, or some other quality.” In Jason Eatherly’s fine art paintings and gallery work with his use of mixed media appears to be very “authentic” under the definition that Abbing uses in this book. For his street artwork, I do question the authenticity of his Queen Eli, because of its close resemblance to the queen featured on the stamps of mass destruction produced by the group Black Smoke in 2003. Eatherly does make the profile of the queen his own by adding personalized touches like a spray mask and a pearl necklace, but

²⁶ Paul 107, page 13.

still being so closely related to the stamp series can we still call Eatherly's queen authentic?

9. James Bau Graves, *Cultural Democracy*, 2005.

Inside *Cultural Democracy* James Bau Graves explains how traditional and grassroots cultures can survive and thrive through opportunities like those given to “mainstream eurocentric cultures,” or can they? Graves references Anthropologist James Clifford and showcases the *Art-Culture System: A Machine for Making Authenticity*. Graves describes how everyday items like blankets and bedtime stories usually reside in the area of authentic artifacts, and typically takes an outsider specialist to declare the object a work of Art. In this case, items move from indigenous culture to fine art such as tribal art objects located in galleries or even spray paint cans used by graffiti artists, but once out of context does it lose its authenticity?

Graves also touches on music within this book, and this reminded me of mainstream hip-hop transitioning from underground rap. Transitions like this are seen in many forms of music and is sometimes the only attention ethnic cultures receive from mainstream music but is nearly always altered in transition.

10. Tom Borrup, *The Creative Community Builders Handbook*, 2006.

The *creative Community Builders Handbook* is a useful how-to guide for tapping into cultural resources to effect positive community change. I chose this piece as a

possible guide as I think about what is next for Jason Eatherly and the street art community in Austin. Street art is such an important part of the cultural identity of Austin and is experienced nearly everywhere. The Keep Austin Weird unofficial city slogan and with the help of organizations like SprATX, The Hope Outdoor Gallery, and Art on 5th artists are presented with opportunities to become entrepreneurs and careerists. Borrup says that studies show that studies show that small community based cultural groups can have a far larger impact on the community as a whole than their size would suggest. In Pennsylvania groups like Borrup mentioned in poor and, middle-class neighborhoods experienced positive school retention and increased civic engagement while lowering statistics like teen pregnancy and youth delinquency.²⁷ Borrup also goes on to discuss the idea of promoting stewardship of place by developing civic pride and responsibility through good placemaking and design practices²⁸ like in Austin the relocation of the Hope outdoor art gallery. This new space in west Austin will provide permission and “free space” walls for artists to express themselves on six acres of land. This new space will create a community gathering space and provide workshops and classes for artists looking to create a business out of their art.

²⁷ Borrup, Page 11.

²⁸ Borrup, Page 19.

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Release Forms

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Documentation Release Form

I, Molly Maroney, am a participant in the research of current cultural transitions of modern graffiti artists. I understand that the purpose of this research project is to explore how many graffiti artists transition from the streets to the gallery and the evolution of their cultural identity. I further understand and grant permission to Leah Roberts, a student in the Masters of Cultural Sustainability program of Goucher College to photograph, videotape and otherwise document as a part of this research project.

I understand that Leah Roberts plans to retain the product of my participation in the research, including but not limited to my interview, presentation, video, photographs, statements, name, images or likeness, voice, and written materials ("My Collection") as part of his/her graduate school portfolio and that it may be used for the research purposes described above.

I hereby grant to Leah Roberts ownership of the physical property comprising My Collection. Additionally, I hereby grant to Leah Roberts, at no cost, the perpetual, non exclusive, transferable, worldwide right to use, reproduce, transmit, display, perform, prepare derivative works from, distribute, and authorize the redistribution of the materials in My Collection in any medium for educational, non-commercial purposes. By giving this permission, I understand that I retain any copyright and related rights that I may hold.

I hereby release Goucher College's Graduate Programs, and its assignees and designees, from any and all claims and demands arising out of or in connection with the use of My Collection, including but not limited to any claims for copyright infringement, defamation, invasion of privacy, or right of publicity.

If I have any questions, I may reach Leah Roberts at 540-255-4404 or Lerob003@mail.goucher.edu

ACCEPTED AND AGREED

Participant Signature

Date 4/6/18

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Molly Maroney

Address

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Student Signature

Leah Roberts

Date 5/5/18

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Leah Roberts