

jon leniz

"It's a never-ending process. I always have to learn so my students can learn."

What drew you to art?
I have been interested in Chinese & Japanese art since childhood, but I was also interested in other aspects of those cultures. You have to study what others do, not just painting or calligraphy, but poetry, characters and etymology, philosophy.

What inspires you in your art?
My inspirations are broad, but my main study is related to Japanese Zen art called Zenga. It's a spiritual approach in the sense that you try to show or express your spirit, your feeling, the moment. Here, now, Zenga artists are not realistic—they don't care too much if they are doing the exact mountain or bamboo. It's more about expressing themselves.

How do you decide what to write on your paintings?
Just knowing the tradition gives you the tools to write something. Many calligraphers will do the same phrases, but the entry will be different every time. You can write in five scripts—

What draws you to teaching?
I learn through the teaching itself—

PHOTO: JON LENIZ

lindsey walter

"I really believe in the arts and the sciences in both their importance for society and my own personal growth."

How did you discover ceramics?
My first time wheel throwing was at a Renaissance Fair, at a stall where the person had a wheel out. I must have been 12. After that I had more specialized art classes in middle school and went to a high school with a great ceramics department. Starting there, I took ceramics multiple times each semester to get all the different aspects. My favorite medium is raku, which is throwing with sculpture. I really enjoy the visual and physical nature of taking a wheel-thrown piece that's smooth then carving or pressing in a pattern. Part of it is because I had so many classes in high school that I had to kind of break out of the set expectations and push our studio further.

What excites you about the process?
I really appreciate the structure of scientific thought you have a process, it works or it doesn't, and you try again. There are so many pieces moving through the cycle of any given time that you can try something and then try again. I also really like the technical application of color—glazes, underglazes, stains, glazes. Each has a specific and unique recipe to work with the clay we use and has to be fired to a specific temperature. You can tweak recipes

PHOTO: LINDSEY WALTER

Capitol Hill Arts Workshop Faculty Exhibition
JANUARY 2015

kentgay DESIGN
Exhibition Catalog
Faculty Exhibition
Capitol Hill Arts Workshop
Graphic Design by Kent Gay
Photography by Leslie Mansour
Words by Hannah Jacobson
with CHAW Teaching Artists

kent gay

What does it mean to you to be an artist?
I'm not sure. I've been exploring that. I think it has to do with the moment that I start drawing—what am I doing and thinking about at the moment that I'm drawing. It's about the artifact; the art object; the primacy of the creative thing. I never thought of myself as an artist—I was always a designer. I did exhibition and graphic design for 15 years and was always on a deadline and assignment. The mid-century design ideal is to never see the hand of the designer... Design involves other people's judgment and estimation—you allow others to make choices also. You're often working

"...when you're working with pen, you put down a line, it's done. You can't erase it. You have to accept it."

with a team of curators, experts, the audience. I've worked on exhibits where everybody's looking at your work, so it felt very much less personal—it was more in the service of something else besides your point of view. Being an artist is being much more independent of all that.

What compels you about drawing?
When I'm drawing, I'm just thinking about the drawing. I don't want to copy what I see; I want to compose and not be a slave to illusion or replicating illusion. More and more, I think of taking it as visual material and composing it in another medium. That's especially true of line drawings—that's why I love them—more than tonal drawings. I've done figural, tonal drawings, but that's really about replicating the illusion of appearance. Looking at line, it's so much more abstract—it helps me go in that direction of creating an invention. Drawing is really important in the design process, in the way you think—it really is a language.

PHOTO: KENT GAY

leslie m. mansour

"We can make better choices every day; we can be kinder and more patient, mindful and empathetic. What we do to each other, we do to ourselves."

How did you discover photography?
I was on a school trip to Yosemite, and I took a film camera with me. It was so peaceful and inspiring to me. A few years later I discovered there was a darkroom at my high school. I took the class and then assisted so I could work there.

What was it like going to college specifically for photography?
It was designed so that we would come out commercial, fashion, or portrait photographers—it wasn't a school of fine art. That's what I learned more toward: an out-of-the-box playfulness in what I photographed. I've always been fascinated with things in the moment, so my own personal work is instant, inspiring me in the moment it happens. That kind of thing wasn't accepted at the school. They wanted photos to follow the rules. I felt my photos had to

be within these constraints and if it wasn't perfect, it wasn't good. It was very competitive and I felt guilty for my lack of confidence when I got out.

How does teaching impact you as an artist?
Teaching has totally transformed my identity as a photographer, as an artist. I don't feel that guilty anymore. No one should feel guilty for wanting to make art or wanting to be an artist. Being at CHAW has helped me identify as an artist and embrace what I love to do. The projects inspire me also—I really love self-portraits so I always make sure it's a project my students do. Self-portraiture is about introspection, where we look at our flaws and strengths and how those things help you be a balanced, beautiful person.

How did CHAW impact you as an artist?
CHAW was a whole world of art: it wasn't just about photography anymore. I remember sitting in Jeremy's ceramics class and making a sculpture, doing my own thing and feeling so empowered transforming clay in my hand when I had never touched clay before. It was my introduction to art, something I'd always wanted. After that experience, my photography didn't change—I changed. I wanted to take art classes and more

than anything, I was meeting artists: I was learning about their processes, passions and expertise. I was learning how transformative their art is for them and for their students.

Why do you make art?
Because it's fun; it's like taking a big, deep breath of fresh air. It's genuine, it's in the moment. I do art because it's a part of who I am. It's not about labels but about existing each day and being okay with whatever happens. Sometimes as artists we feel guilty or frustrated that we're not creating. It's in that moment that we need to remember we ARE artists BECAUSE of that frustration—we need that moment to refresh, or maybe to start something new. I try to do what feels natural. I forgive myself for the days I don't feel creative and I try to be patient with my process, my art and myself.

How do you know when a photo is finished?
Things are always changing and evolving—it doesn't end with a picture in a frame. I like to work in the moment, getting different angles and perspectives so I have options when making my final selections. I don't enjoy spending too much time editing on the computer so once the moment has been captured, that's usually it

PHOTO: LESLIE MANSOUR

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