

COLOURED *with* KINDNESS

Sharon Martin talks to artist Tim Dobson (aka SidXo), who was rejected from art school but nevertheless followed his passion to realise his creative vision



A true artist will always find a way! The journey may be long and arduous, peppered with twist, turns and hurdles, but if the passion is strong enough it will drive a creative spirit forward with grit and determination.

Tim Dobson (otherwise known as the artist SidXo) dreamed of going to art college. However, after attending an interview at a prominent university he was left feeling rejected and disheartened.

“My portfolio consisted of skies and urban settings painted in acrylics. I scribbled graffiti style cartoons all over them in marker pen. I had my heart set on this work and hoped it would be well received. The interviewers told me my work was offensive to them and I would be wasting my time in art school because I wasn’t making art. It was deflating but a good learning experience.”

Despite all of his friends being offered a place on the course, Tim took some comfort when he later discovered that tearing down a prospective student’s work was standard practice back in the noughties.

“Students were expected to counter negative comments with an artist spiel on why all art can be offensive to those that seek offence. I royally failed that bit of the interview because I’m a literal thinker. But I refused to let a single, isolated incident change the rest of my life. Believing I had

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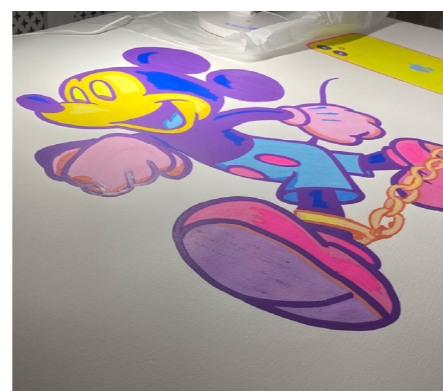
something worthwhile to share, I decided to continue on and find my audience.”

Tim enrolled on a few art courses and spent a lot of time honing his IT skills, recognising that computers and systems would play a huge role in society and business quite early on.

“I enjoy learning new skills and appreciate that experience because it stood me in good stead for the age we live in. I have worked across several industries and mediums as a freelance designer, CG artist and engineer. My roots have always been in the conception and creation of things.”

Inspiration for Tim’s art comes from different sources, although pop culture is clearly a driving element.

“I get inspired all day long; my head is like an ideas factory. Pop culture alone has unlimited resources when you need to pick a topic. My most satisfying work is that which people interpret as centred around kindness. I love the concept of making people smile and not being physically present. Artwork can



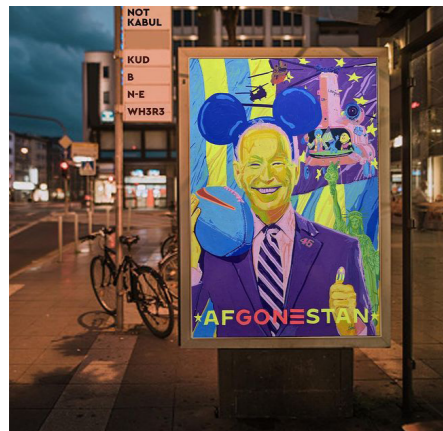
achieve that on my behalf. Art is a constant experiment - ultimately beautiful, insane nonsense.”

Also gleaned inspiration from the works of Takashi Murakami, KAWS, computer games, cartoons, and big brand advertising, Tim is never short of ideas for new works. “We’re surrounded by incredible amounts of information and visual representation. I find it all fascinating.”

Working with a plethora of different mediums, Tim’s art is a riot of colour and techniques bound together with raw creativity. “Sometimes I stencil, sometimes I paint freehand. There’s an experiment I like with one-line drawings where the pen stays on the page; I purposely look away from the page and draw what I see. I just have fun.”

Acrylics have been his medium of choice recently. “They are quick-drying, which helps me get fast results when I work. I can get a smooth finish and acrylics layer up nicely. The pigments are captivating in person. Spray paint is my go-to for covering large areas. You ➔





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can get a lot done in a short space of time. Kudos to Erik Rotheim for inventing the aerosol.”

Eager to push boundaries, Tim began creating oak canvases. “I take big logs and cut them into small planks. After joining several together, I draw on the wood and cut out the entire line freehand. The inset is carefully painted with a solid, bold colour then the inner sections are filled with painted patterns. It feels great to work with something so close to nature; each piece is inherently unique before I make a single mark. Plus, I get to use power tools in the process which is always a bonus.” The oak used is sustainably sourced. “It arrives in huge sections for me to slice up. It can take a while to produce the finished oak canvases but the artist in me relishes being a part of the entire process.”

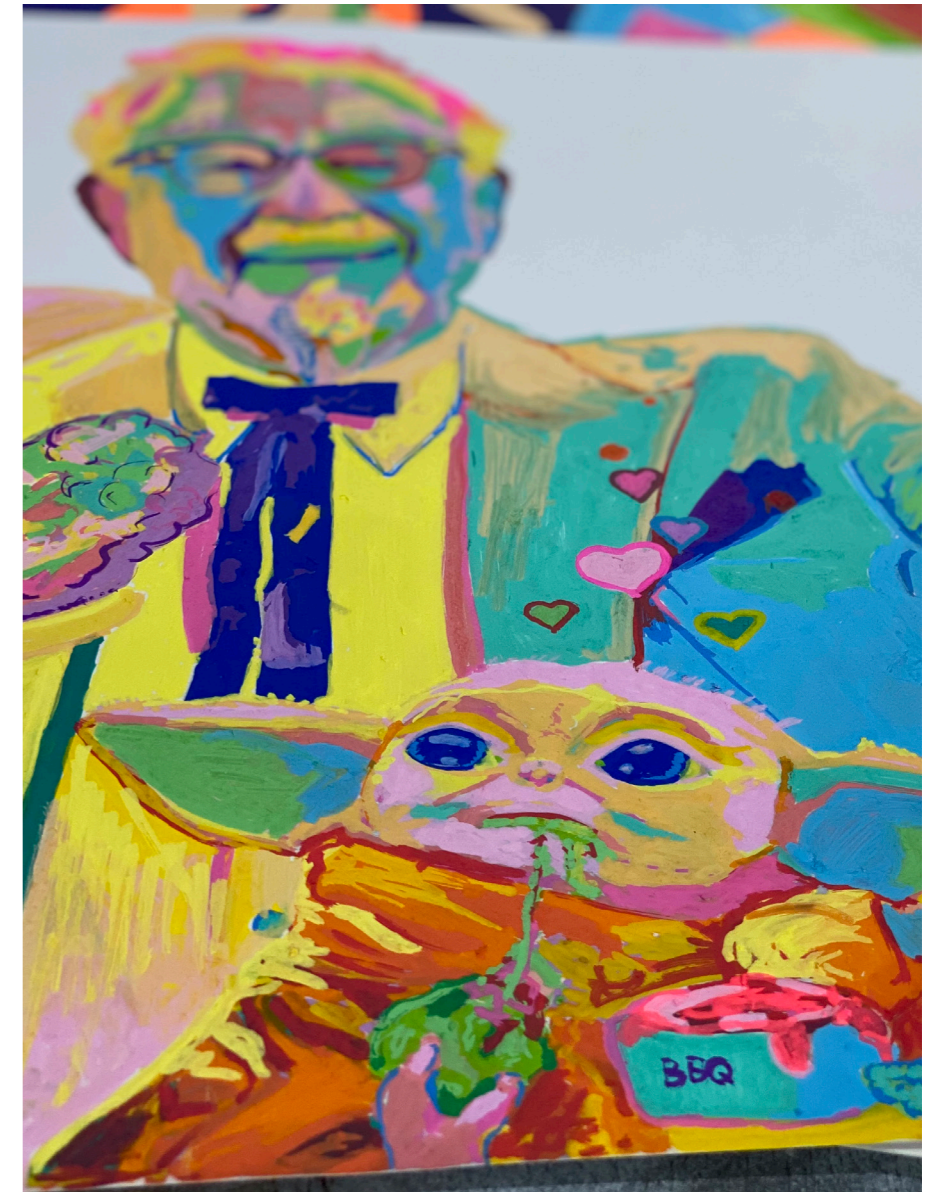
Last year Tim created a couple of NFT editions and accompanying physical works on OpenSea to describe his personal experience with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). “I used video because it tangibly conveyed my thoughts and expressed my feelings so others might relate. I embodied this in character form and called the characters ExyOzys. There’s an X eye, an O eye, and hashes over the mouth. One interpretation describes how

my verbal communication is somehow caged and how I only see half of the social cues at times. The videos give an example of how I see the wonderfully attractive and complex world through autistic eyes. I don’t claim to be a sage on all things ASD, but I can show you how I see things.

“I believe a journey can be shared between an artist and an audience. For me, there is an initial confusion in the fizzy mess, leading to revelation and understanding. Some people love to have a puzzle to solve. Others simply like the combination of shapes and colours. Each time I visit my ExyOzy work, I see something new. Whether you share my interpretations or just see a brightly coloured mess, you see something that has a strong chance of lifting your spirit and making you smile. I took the video concept and started paintings in the same style. I think they’re a very effective tool.”

Donating 25% of his earnings from the projects OpenSea and ExyOzys to the National Autistic Society was a heartfelt gesture and something Tim felt compelled to do after having had his own private struggles with ASD. “I wanted to donate to thank the people and charities that have been involved in my own family life, and I want to see other families get the much-needed support they require.”

Needless to say, Pop Art for Autism is a



project very close to Tim’s heart. “A healthy community recognises the value of giving time and resources to the less fortunate. As a family, we provide financial support to people from all over the world. That doesn’t take away from the fact that we have our own struggles and life can be tough. Autism is a part of our daily family life and is personal to me.”

Due for release this month, Tim’s ExyOzy paintings entitled *Sensory Overload* is his favourite collection to date. “I’m excited to see how they go down. I love the portrayal of things not being what they seem, the Easter eggs that you need to spend a bit of time on. Irrespective of the personal connection and hidden meanings I have a selfish attraction to this one piece. The colouring, the finish the shapes just all line up for me.”

As his career is in its relative infancy, Tim looks up to one artist in particular. “Without a doubt, I would have to say that Brian Donnelly (the KAWS one) is my favourite artist.

“His capability as a creative director and an artist is unparalleled because he has

fantastic ideas. For me, the ideas are where it’s all at, the mixture of contrived appeal and clever statements. I find his sculptures and paintings entertaining and uplifting, quirky and always kind. He doesn’t fit in a box and most of all he is humble. The world needs more humility. That’s my opinion and I’m sticking to it. I’d love to paint an ExyOzy with KAWS, I feel like his work has had the biggest influence in my art and I’d love to see his interpretation on it.”

The future looks bright for this exciting fledgling artist, and you are certain to be seeing his work popping up in the most unlikely places. Part of what makes us human is our capacity to communicate something so that others can share, relate, and engage with it.

The artist SidXO has a gift in transforming his ideas into something tangible. There is a passion, perhaps an obsession with creating. He is definitely one to watch!

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