

Abstracting Personal Experience

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Coffee Shop Notes

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Last Thursday, on 23 October, at Gallaudet University's Washburn Arts Center, Roy Ricci Vanderstok wowed attendees at his first exhibition that showcased his recent large canvas paintings. A documentary-style film was also featured, which demonstrated his love for skateboarding and the introspection he gets from urban surroundings. This one-time-only event, VIDIVERSE, was hosted by the Gallaudet Daily Jolt website team, with refreshments, programs, ushers, and sales of postcards, as well as an auction.

The show opened with a short "tour" of his works around the central lobby of the Washburn Arts Center, with Ricci discussing each painting and answering questions. Next, the film was shown, after Ricci stood up on the stage and shared a few thoughts on how his heart belongs back home in the Netherlands and how inspired he is to have had this opportunity to come study in America. As a student at Gallaudet University, he earned his BA in Art History. The film explored Ricci as a figure moving through DC urban scenery, standing, walking, sitting, and skateboarding, with a minimum of dialogue. The mood in the film was overtly contemplative, yet scenes showed Ricci experimenting with skateboard tricks. According to his fellow Alpha Sigma Pi brother, William Windhorn, the film is "a mirror of [Ricci's] life." That is, like when he skateboards, he takes the same risks with art. The film highlights his "personality."

The paintings on exhibition dealt with themes such as love and hidden desires, as well as mental exploration. The style, as Ricci contends, takes on a strong Surrealist bent—a good touch of Daliesque, if you may—much of the meanings behind his artwork is abstract and open to interpretation on the viewer's part. What is most interesting about Ricci's work is how his art seems to have been executed intellectually, that is, the figures are clear and carefully painted, with heavy development on conceptual meaning, but no one at the show stood back and hem-hawed about intricate meanings. Instead, the prevailing comment of the evening was "powerful!" which is an emotional response.

One painting drew much commentary from bystanders: "Systematic '03." In this painting, there are three distinctive figures of anthropomorphized body parts (hands?) that seem to take on apple-like features, hung by venous sinews in a brilliant blue sky, while below on the yellow ground, a headless figure stands, facing the left, next to a wooden chair. The figure wears a magenta scarf that streams out behind in an unseen wind, while holding an umbrella. "Systematic '03" had a sale price of \$200 to start with, but was sold in auction for over \$300 dollars—someone sure got disappointed that night.

Although this was an one-night event, and the works featured are not currently available to the public at large, you can still enjoy some of Ricci's earlier works in the online gallery at the Daily Jolt website:

<http://gallaudet.dailyjolt.com>. You may notice some Deaf-related content in these online images, however, at the VIDIVERSE show, deafness was not a prevailing theme—mainly, abstracted personal experiences were the focus.
