

**De:** Rob Tucker rob.tucker.artist@gmail.com  
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**À:** francoisbonnelartwork@gmail.com

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How did you decide to become a painter?

I am New Zealand based painter who forged an abstract style at a young age. I look to capture my subject matter in a naive and raw manner - built through heavy-handed mark-making and expressive painterly application. Mark making, to me, is a tangible portrayal of instinct – a way to illustrate a feeling without literal reference. Here I can lose myself in an act of the application to create something of pure freedom. I predominately work with paint, which in my application plays a strong sculptural role – constructing and deconstructing the layers. Although I do paint still life, accurately depicting subject matter has never been my focus. It's just a vehicle for me to explore mark-making in an expressive and somewhat imaginary cartoon-like approach.

- Your first memory of painting...

My first memory of painting was when I first started school, maybe age 5. I felt most comfortable to let go and trial out primitive-like pictures with all the other kids. Such an instinctual act.

My hand writing was never the best, along with my accuracy of my paintings. However, I felt an immediate sense of expression and freedom to carve my own mark without caring too much about the atomy of a rainbow or butterfly. I guess this principle has really stuck and now plays a paramount role in my aesthetic – never to depict things literally, rather focussing on a natural feeling.

- Did an artist particularly inspire you?

Basquait really left an impression on me when I started to take more serious interest in painting, at the end of my high school years. I loved his inner-child expressions and freedom to play with his materials and scrawly subjects. His style definitely gave me the confidence to know expressive, abstraction could be considered as high-brow, professional art.

- Do you need to understand to love a painting?

Art connects people across race, age and gender - communicating without speaking. So no, I don't believe you do entirely. I think the best way to read a painting is without any prior influence – what does it say to you in the first moments you see it, does it make you feel something? Overlay that with some contextual understanding of where the artist sits within history and that's all you need.

I love looking into the picture to see how the artist built it, observing the processes and material to imagine what the artist was thinking / feeling when crafting it. This moves me the most, as some marks on a painting surface look like fossils of a time and mood for the artist.

- Is there a work for which you said to yourself "This is exactly what I wanted to do"?

There has been much work in the past that I have been extremely proud of. While on the flip side there's been many that I disdain... but other's really connect with. As my style is very instinctual, there's less focus on planning, scamping and drafting – I just start on a fresh plane and my imagination flow. In that sense I guess no work ever comes out as "exactly what I wanted to do" as I never planned it in the first place!

- The famous work that you don't like ...

No answer.

- What is essential for your creation?

Routine! I treat my days painting like a 9-5 job, heading to the studio early to have a stovetop coffee and start building into a headspace in order to begin. I need to be surrounded by my organised chaos of paints and boards to achieve this. Often I'll leave the studio and that headspace, to do a couple laps at the local pool, and then return with mindset to accomplish. In these cases, work is laborious but extremely stimulating. When work is frantic, I'm completely immersed and let my subconscious take over so I can somewhat observe myself making the marks and building an aesthetic composition. Ironically, it's a very free and liberating feeling.

- What is your relationship to recognition?

Creative recognition is the greatest form to me, while the other marketing stuff is not so much. It's all about the work and how fresh and good is. Over time, I think this always shines brighter and will less likely fade away compared to an artist who has greater gallery recognition.

- If tomorrow you could no longer be a painter, what would you do?

That's a great question! I would be so lost without my painting, there's days when it's so challenging and confrontational but I really believe I am doing exactly what I was made to do – create.

I guess I would have to take another high-risk creative journey within a different practice. The skill set and mindset I have developed to date will come to great use while I divert.

- Your artistic dream ..

To feel the most comfortable and with little angst while creating the most perfect work. However, I've excepted that this is in fact part of the creative journey and the highs and lows is what make us who we are.

And here's a brief summary of my bio.

Rob Tucker's artistic career began during the experimental painting of his youth which he took an expressive approach, warping perspectives and playing with color to conjure emotion on the canvas.

His mature style draws from classical traditions of still-life, but filtered through by aggressive brushwork, heavy mark-making and semi-abstract. The images and motifs that feature in his paintings often reference the masters. Morandi and Matisse

mixed with nods to popular culture - this includes cartoon-like flowers, cars and heavy machinery.

In addition to using oil paint, Tucker also incorporates a mix of media in his paintings, especially spray paint, pastel and markers. Tucker has gained global recognition for his manipulation of color, which he applies aggressively and in vividly using contrasting combinations. Free from the academy or any formal training, Tucker has been truly able to develop and explore his distinct expressive, painterly and collage-like approach to his works.