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# The Art Edge with Brian Sherwin

[« PREVIOUS](#) | [Main](#)

## [Art Talk on the Edge: Interview with artist Seth Benzel](#)

by Brian Sherwin on 4/16/2015 10:37:55 AM

[1 Comment](#)

*This article is part of an on-going interview series on The Art Edge. The series will include interviews with artists, art dealers, curators, and other art world professionals. I have interviewed hundreds of artists in the past: James Rosenquist, Mark Ryden, Michel Craig-Martin, Sylvia Sleigh, Norman Carlberg, William T. Wiley, Chet Zar, Aleksandra Mir, Mark Staff Brandl... the list goes on. I have also interviewed my fair share of art dealers in the past: Edward Winkleman, Caryn Coleman, Fraser Kee Scott, Martita Slewe, Monique Meloche, Jan Wentrup, Steven Krul, Sara Nightingale, and so on. This wave of insightful*

*interviews will continue on The Art Edge.*



***Deconstruct It*** by artist Seth Benzel

**(Mixed media on Canvas)**

Artist **Seth Benzel** utilizes various painting and mixed media techniques in order to create awe-inspiring abstract paintings. I find the energetic quality of Seth Benzel's paintings to be most intriguing. Each painting offers a bombardment of visual information -- a swirl of possibilities that beckon viewers to build upon their own interpretations. Seth has established a connection with great art movements of the past... all while breaking ground in the present. I recently caught up with Seth in order to learn more about his art and life.

**Brian Sherwin: My understanding is that you've had a long connection with art. You were introduced to art an a very young age... can you share part of that experience?**

**Seth Benzel:** Art has always been a part of my life. I was surrounded by art influences growing up. My father was an architect and painter. My mom also had an artistic sense and encouraged my development. My earliest memories were painting along side my dad and listening to Bob Dylan. This all started a dialogue that continues today.

**BS: It is great that you received support from your family early on. Did they support formal art education as well?**

**SB:** I often say that my constant professor is my father. My father has always been a strong learning source for me. He has now retired and spends most of his time painting. So we have an ongoing dialogue. It is a wonderful exchange of ideas and passion. That said, I attended Lake Erie College and Pratt Art Institute.

**BS: What can you tell us about your experiences at Lake Erie College and Pratt?**

**SB:** The first was a Liberal Arts school. Lake Erie College did not carry a huge following. However, it did have a BFA program and amazing facilities. They set me free to explore drawing and painting at will. I experienced a great level of studio independence while there. However, I felt I needed more of a challenge... so I enrolled into Pratt.

Pratt offered me a taste of big city artistic ideas. Unfortunately my career as a horse trainer pulled me away before I could complete my degree. Both schools helped me to develop as an artist.

**BS: Let's discuss your current work. Can you offer an introduction to your studio practice? For example, do you explore any specific themes?**

**SB:** I describe my work as Abstract Deconstructionism. Themes are less important than finding new realities through the deconstruction of space. To me the canvas is a puzzle. It is complete at the start. From there I shake up the pieces, break down spacial relationships and reconfigure them to suggest a new possibility.

I am not interested in a 'real' depiction of thoughts or images. What interests me is the creation of unique moments. I want my work to be viewed and constantly re-interpreted. In my opinion, a painting should remain in a constant state of flux and able to redefine themselves with each viewing.

**BS: Are you drawn to a specific medium? If so, what attracted you to your preferred medium?**

**SB:** Acrylic is my primary medium because it supports my layering effect. I like the action of washes and drips in the early stages as well. Often times I will incorporate drawing of some sort... either pencil, charcoal or both. In the future I would like to start to combine all of these with the vibrant, finished look of oil paint.

**BS: You mentioned that you enjoy the action of washes and drips during the early stages of painting... what else can you tell us about your painting process?**

**SB:** I start with loose action painting combined with drawing. From there I apply loose washes and drips -- all of this creates subtle imagery and movement that I decide to either develop or paint over. During this process I try to value the mistake and all the little wonders that happen without conscience. At the same time I need to balance this with a readable structure and framework. It is this juxtaposition that is constant: uncontrolled vs. structure... finished vs. unfinished.

**BS: Speaking of structure... do you have any thoughts about the current structure of the art world? Do you have any concerns?**

**SB:** My main concern is that artists need to be encouraged at every stage -- in every society. From that standpoint I think we are lucky. I have traveled to the Middle East. You can see art from a different perspective there. In the Middle East aspects of modern art, for lack of a better way to put it, are still new and finding a way toward the forefront. This gives it a certain genuine feel... a certain innocence that is not hampered by the market / structure we know.

Here and in Europe, we are well beyond those wonderful early stages. We seem to be entering a stage of mainstream commerciality within our little portion of the art world. We are pushed by biennials and art fairs that cattle together high end art dealers and collectors in search of the newest art stars. The economics of it has influenced demand and directly impacted the work being produced. I shudder thinking about it.

**BS: Would you suggest that many artists in the United States and Europe have lost their way due to these influences?**

**SB:** I believe that many have. By in large I take issue with the current state of contemporary art. I see most of it as shallow and lacking substance. I have a feeling it is only going to get worse... unless people start standing up for art beyond the clutches of the mainstream art market.

**BS: In your opinion, what can artists do to help facilitate this change? How can we stand up for art in the face of high-end market influences?**

**SB:** Remain true to your art. It is as simple as that. Don't let the forces of commercialism turn your focus or direction. We all have a journey to

make. Keep it real, no matter how hard it is, or how hard you have to work. Get your work out there... be the best advocate you can be for your own work. Don't allow others to dictate what you create in your studio. Fight the Good Fight.

**BS: In closing, is there anything else you would like to say about your direction as an artist?**

**SB:** I strive to be true to my own voice, keep working and to continue fighting the Good Fight! I hope you've enjoyed my interview with artist Seth Benzel. You can learn more about Seth and his artwork by visiting [www.sbenzel75.faso.com](http://www.sbenzel75.faso.com).

**Take care, Stay true,**

**Brian Sherwin - Editor of The Art Edge**