



STORIES & INSIGHTS // OCTOBER 24, 2024

We're excited to introduce you to the always interesting and insightful Marc Trujillo. We hope you'll enjoy our conversation with Marc below.

Marc, thanks for taking the time to share your stories with us today Can you talk to us about how you learned to do what you do?

I got my undergraduate education at the University of Texas at Austin and my MFA from Yale University School of Art. The formal education really prepares you for a lifetime of continuing to learn, as does teaching, since the accountability of teaching and the students themselves continually push you to keep learning.

My formal education was very fine arts oriented, which in a practical sense means that you are more engaged with the philosophical core you operate from than how to do things. With something like painting, of course these two things are inextricable, and the how is also part of the why. I could have benefited from more practical how-to information early on, but also benefited a great deal from the plurality of art school, and having to navigate a broader set of concerns and disciplines. I think if I had had more financial aid through my education, I would've had more time to focus and would've learned the craft faster, but having to work also informed my worldview, which is a part of the paintings, so it's hard to say what you are trading off when you imagine a situation to be different.

Curiosity and an interest in the world and in painting are not exactly skills, but they do continually motivate you to build skills and understanding. Having something that you want to explore that is appropriate to the medium you want to explore it with takes some time to figure out and part of what you are exploring is painting itself. Making is always part of the thinking. The feedback loop of seeing paintings that motivate you and define painting for you going into the world to see what a good painting would be based on that and then making a painting to test those ideas what develops the mind and points up the skills you need for your work.

CANVAS**REBEL** Meet Marc Trujillo

The obstacles can all fall under subheadings of the two main ones, time, and opportunity.



As always, we appreciate you sharing your insights and we've got a few more questions for you, but before we get to all of that can you take a minute to introduce yourself and give our readers some of your back background and context?

Two hundred yards of polished concrete gives me a chill that makes me want to paint it. Inside a grocery store, a wash of daylight lifts cool notes of color from a linoleum floor already spotted with muffled highlights cast from fluorescent lights above. Strangers are pushing carts around, texting, choosing frozen goods from a reach-in. I occupy the middle ground—the purgatory of the shared spaces of the everyday world of steel and glass we've made for ourselves.

The locations in the paintings are non-destinations, particularly North American kinds of nowhere, at once ubiquitous and yet largely unseen. These places give me the slightly sinking feeling that I know I'm somewhere but not there, present in an absent sort of way. In the mix of shame and awe that I feel, I am inspired by the potential for painting what I'm experiencing in the moment.

Light is particularly important for me. It is how you sell the fiction of the painting as a real moment. The artificial light in the spaces I paint is very different from the light in the Old Master paintings I admire, but my interest in conveying it clearly is the same.

Philosophically, my paintings address how we empty the moment we're in by thinking about what we're going to do or what we've already done. Dostoyevsky said that looking forward we die too soon and looking backward we die too late. The places I paint are largely architectural instantiations of this state of being.

My work is in and of the present and actively engaged with painting's long history. Part of my aim is to bring the old, slow way of looking and making a painting to bear on the places we have made for ourselves that are not meant for sustained attention, but only meant to be passed through. Light is singularly important for me, as it serves to organize the work and is the one element that all aspects of the painting must agree on to convey.

I am proud of the body of work and gratified by some of the attention it has received, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, awards from The American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Tiffany Foundation as well as museum and gallery shows in and across the United States as well as in Rome and the Hague.





Let's talk about resilience next – do you have a story you can share with us?

As an undergraduate, I worked in the service industry as a banquet Captain while I was in school, running large parties and weddings, etc. When I found out I was accepted to Yale, my supervisor told me “When that Yale thing doesn’t work out, you can come back here, and I’ll see if I can get you a job washing dishes.” I thanked him and told him that I’m sure there would be times when things would be hard, and I would be tired and would not want to do what I know I needed to do, and I would think of him and I would get it done.

Using the doubts of other people as motivation can be fuel.



For you, what's the most rewarding aspect of being a creative?

For me, painting itself is the reward. I am thankful and gratified that my work has helped me to make a living and gotten some acknowledgment from well respected, individuals and institutions, but the part I really love is bringing what I have learned back to the studio and getting to work. I do not paint to have a career but instead I am thankful for my career so that I can paint





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