



Dave Thomas gets interviewed by EM on his artistic creativity and surfer style.

When interviewing Dave Thomas, I realized that his artistic ability started early on. He was fifteen at his first attempt and then immediately embraced it. His uninhibited nature, freedom from life, and passion for art carried him through a great education and now successful career. He is frank, honest, talented, and a former California surfer.

EM: Where do you do your work?

DT: I work in my home, a 3 car garage.

EM: Do you work from life, or from photography or from imagination?

DT: If I had to answer using one of your three choices, I'd say imagination, but it's actually a process of discovery, experimentation, trial and error, make and destroy, intuition and hard work.

EM: What moves you most in life, either to inspire you or upset you?

DT: Relating how I feel to studio practice is non-existent to me. I don't wait for inspiration to make paintings; I work through many types of life situations, good and bad. The goal is to WORK! If I don't work, I never find the next problem to solve...What's the question?

No Rules, No Roles, No Problem

Written by Tia Markland

EM: Where do you feel art is going?

DT: Currently, art it's going in a direction than everyone can understand; a reflection of world conditions. But speaking for myself, I'm very focused on being aware and understanding the world around me, as I understand it. I'm sure that is limited, but it's all I can do. I'm very interested in communicating with my peers and fellow artists, not just painters. Knowing and understanding art history is important; so we don't reinvent the wheel.

EM: What is the role of the artist in society?

DT: No role, no rules. Brake as many rules as possible and still communicate.

EM: What is the place of your work in society?

DT: I'm a painter in all things I do, even if I'm making a three dimensional piece of work, I'm still a painter with concerns of a painter.

EM: What technique do you use?

DT: I like the paint and liquid material that eventually dries and surprises me. Mostly, I put paint and liquid material on canvas and paper.

EM: Which is more important to you, the subject of your painting or the way it is executed?

DT: Definitely the way it is executed. The act of creating is much more important to me than the finished painting; it's about the process.

EM: Do you prefer a perfect smooth technique or a more energetic expressive technique and why?

DT: I'm an old surfer and that has influenced my work. I am very physical in the making of my paintings. I have more energy than most people I know, I hope it stays around. I have a lot of unfinished work to do.

EM: Is there anything from your childhood that you think led you to do this work?

DT: I flunked algebra twice in high school, I was fifteen and my counselor put me in an art class. The teacher was a real artist, a painter. I became alive there and converted one of my parent's garages into a studio and painted in that garage until I was twenty. Then I submitted my portfolio to CalArts and got accepted, then moved to LA and dove into my life journey as a painter.

EM: What do you love most about what you do?

DT: Not answering to anyone, making my own rules, and exploring completely new ideas in my own way. Solving problems that I have created on the canvas, being alone in the studio, and being fearful of the mark I just put on the surface...is that enough?

EM: How do you feel when you finish a piece?

DT: Take about a day and strut around really proud of myself, then the second day it starts all over.

EM: Tell us about the first time you made your first piece?

DT: High school. I had been looking at Marc Chagall's paintings in the library and thought I

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could make one as good, if not better. And thought I did at the time.

EM: Do you have any crazy or funny stories about your art experiences?

DT: Driving across the country from LA to NYC in 1973 with artist friends from CalArts. It was my first trip to that city; buying a box of cigars and smoking the whole box in one week.

Attending galleries, museum openings and art parties; I thought I was pretty cool rubbing shoulders with art types I had only read about in art magazines.