

Some thoughts for the young artists and designers in this show:

Jurying an art show is a funny thing. (Is it jurying? Juroring? I'm not sure it's even a real word at all. Silly art people.)

Being a juror for an art show is a funny thing.

Art and design are inherently subjective. We can say we like one thing more than another, but can we really say one thing is actually *better* than another? I don't even like picking a favorite color or favorite movie, I've hated the whole concept of favorites since I was a kid, who am I to pass judgment on a bunch of students I don't even know?

My mind, perhaps due to my own instructors repeatedly inflicting such readings on me when I was the same age as many of you, turns to that enigmatic mystic of art theory, Marcel Duchamp. In 1961, Duchamp gave a lecture at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, now presented to art students in essay form as *The Creative Act*. In this lecture Duchamp touched on the disconnect between the intention and reception of creative work, the all too common phenomenon of great work being overlooked or misunderstood. He said:

All in all, the creative act is not performed by the artist alone; the spectator brings the work in contact with the external world by deciphering and interpreting its inner qualification and thus adds his contribution to the creative act.

What he is essentially suggesting is that when your work leaves the proverbial nest and goes out into the world, it grows and becomes something else you may not have intended, *many* something-elses in fact, a different something-else for everybody who sees it. When you come to this gallery and look at the work on display, you are engaging in the creative act of interpreting, judging, *completing* the things you see. That's kind of a cool thing to think about.

But then the same principle is applied to *your* work too, and that doesn't always feel as cool. Sometimes it's a painful thing.

I'm a father, and I can't help but see the parallels between this and parenthood. My two sons are almost eleven and they are obsessed with all kinds of really annoyingly stupid stuff. Like, *seriously* stupid stuff. I won't mention specifics, because most of you

are relatively young and probably like a lot of the same things, so just imagine whatever you think would be a stupid thing for a ten year old to be into and then imagine my kids being obsessed with that. I love my kids, but it's true. At least, it's *my* truth. (See how that works?) And that's okay. I can think it's dumb, and they can love it, and maybe they'll be embarrassed about it when they're older, but probably not. I helped make them and I helped raise them and soon they'll go out into the world and make themselves all over again. I probably won't approve of all of the choices they make, and that's okay too. I'm sure you understand this; you don't do everything your parents want you to do, or most of you wouldn't be in art school right now.

This is how it works with the things we make, too, and you'll need to come to terms with it. But the secret? You can still exert a lot of influence even if you can't control it. Don't even try to control it, because that always backfires. Instead, you pay attention to the reception your work gets and you take notes. You try tweaking your work in different ways and see what helps get your intended point across more often. You show your work to as many different people as you possibly can, at all stages of development, and see what they think. Enter all the juried art shows you can and see what work gets accepted and which doesn't, and pay attention to where your audience is. This is only one show and mine is only one opinion. In fact, the same thing goes for your teachers. They are only one voice, albeit well informed ones. If you don't like what they say, then (after you consider what you can learn from their feedback) go see what other people think and see if there's a different audience out there for your work.

So. This is all in explanation for how I rationalize passing judgment on your accomplishments. I did my best with this show, but there was a lot of great work and it was hard. I think it turned out really well, but I don't expect you to agree with the choices I made. No matter what, whether you won a big award or had your favorite thing you've ever made turned down for the exhibition, I hope you go get a second opinion. And a third, and a fourth, and on and on. Keep making things and keep showing them to people and keep growing and learning.

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