

Zupi Magazine (Brazil) interview with Clara Mazin, November 2010

Luke, tell us about your childhood. Did you always like to draw? What things did you use to draw when you were a little boy?

I had a memorable childhood growing up in the countryside of England. I drew all sorts of things usually inspired by science fiction and action movies.

Since when did you draw professionally? Have you ever wanted to have another job?

I started full time professionally in 2006. I've always had a desire to make movies, but drawing is more direct to me, with less hurdles to make my message.

Do you have a diploma, in that field? Do you think it makes a difference?

I never went to art school, and decided that traveling the world would be my education and source for inspiration. I think school is great for people who have a sincere interest to learn and can afford the fees. Otherwise, it makes no difference. It's all about personal ambition in whatever you do.

For you to paint by hand or via computer is the same thing? Do you have a preference for any of these methods? Which of them do you use more often?

I only use the computer to colour and arrange my hand made drawings. I can't say I have a preference, because I apply my art to all mediums- walls, paper, video etc. I guess pen and paper does come before any approach I make.

Your drawings are full, full of details. How long does it take to create one of these pieces?

The majority of my drawings are made on a letter size piece of paper, and that would never take me more than a day or two. If I make a drawing on poster size paper, I could spend up to 2 weeks on it.

Would you say that your mind is just like your works - full of "many things"?

I think everyone's mind is full of many things. I feel fortunate, because drawing is an outlet for me to have rest from thinking too much. I honestly don't think a lot when I draw. I'm usually listening to music. I treat drawing like a meditation to escape my mind, and use it as a tool to express what's inside it.

Speaking of details, tell us what are the "small stuff" of everyday life that inspire you.

I am inspired my life in general. I like to see that all things in existence, living or inanimate come from something or somewhere. Everything exists because of something else. Once you can see the story behind a subject, it's inspiring to feel connected to it. Even the things we dislike- we are still connected to it, because we are alive to experience that feeling. I like how connected we are to everything and it makes me feel happy to be alive to witness it all- good or bad.

Street art is often made quickly, because of its illegality. How do you manage to paint these works, with so many details? Have you ever been arrested?

I'm not a graffiti or street artist. I respect the act of artists that do "illegal" art for the freedom of uncensored expression, but I feel more confidence in the freedom of not being arrested or limited by the "laws" of society. I was busted for graffiti once, and wasn't charged and took it as a warning. I like to travel with my art and don't want to have a record stopping me from that. I tend to peruse legal arrangements and if I seldom do illegal work on the street, I'll use stickers, because they are quick to put up. Traveling the world, I see that North America is the one of the worst places for laws against graffiti. They hit you hard here, locking up artists with hardened criminals. It's horrible. So, I think graffiti artists are either reckless or deeply committed to their craft. I get it. I respect graffiti art on many levels, but I also feel that a graffiti artist can limit the exposure of their talent, because they want to maintain "street" credit. Artists like Basquiat, Keith Haring, Barry McGee and Os Gemeos are very inspiring because they told stories with characters. They changed the way we look at graffiti and really opened up a wave of interest in underground art. I may not be a street artist, but I do credit my practice to the street art culture I am inspired by.

How did the interest for character creation begin?

I lived in Taiwan in 2003. They have character art in so many things there. It really influenced me to peruse my love of drawing characters. That year was when I decided I wanted to take art from being a hobby into being a habit.

You say they are complicated or simple? And what about life? Would you say that it is harmonic or chaotic?

It's both. I see the illusion that comes with being too elevated or too grounded. Who's to tell me that I can't party hard one day, or meditate in a forest the next? No one, but myself. I feel that the human spirit is designed to go through highs and lows- it's what makes us human. I live in a part of the world where I am afforded the luxury to express that. I have the choice to party, make art, make money, lose money, be peaceful or be in pain. There's millions of people in the world who are born into poverty and chaos, because of random circumstance, and the exploitation from the wealthy and greedy. There's no doubt that love and light exists in the darkest corners of the globe, but I'm not going to be ignorant and say that a starving child can find happiness in hunger. The world is an ugly beautiful place to be. For those of us that aren't burdened by innate survival from the moment of conception, I think we need to accept less control in our lives, and let chaos have its way with us.

Finally, tell a curious detail of your life! :)

Many years ago a friend and I went for a beach hike on the rugged west coast of Vancouver Island, B.C, Canada. The tide came in and pushed us into the cliffs. We were forced to bushwhack through forest terrain that was so thick that you never felt that you were on the ground. Once in a while we were able to follow bear trails, but this seemed more dangerous than balancing on fallen logs and pushing our way through thick bush. We felt we had gone too far to turn back, so we continued to follow the jagged coast until we reached the next public exit. We couldn't walk on the beach because of the cliffs, high tides and crashing waves. Along the way we had to eat leaves and drink stream water to stay alive. Our feet were so sore that when we eventually saw a resort on the other side of some cliffs, we waded through freezing cold water to get to the other side. The adventure took us 14 hours to get back to civilization. Our saving grace was a clear full moon that gave us light through the night. We got back to our car and drove 4 hours so I could show up late at my job. I had twigs and dirt in my hair and cuts all over my arms and face. I could have gone straight home, but I was so high on adrenaline that I felt I could work a six hour shift. It was an experience of a lifetime that taught me about the extremes that the human body is capable of. It was our own poor judgement that put us at the mercy of Mother Nature, but in reflection, I appreciate the experience.