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Professor Guy

Introduction to Art 1035

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Art in Public Experience

It was January 20, 2021, I just got done hanging out with some high school friends I have not seen in months. I decided it was time to begin the first task on the assignments I must complete. 'The Art in Public assignment' in Art1035 was the first task on my list. I launched the Metro Nashville Art Commission website and scrolled through the many selections presented in front of me. There was a variety of artwork to choose from. With all having different structures, colors, location, and meaning. It seemed impossible to choose just one until I glanced over an artwork called 'Liquid 615'. I did not want to read the description of the artwork until after I visited the area at least once.

This artwork had me intrigued, and the reason for it is because I am familiar with the area. I have had picnics, runs, hang out sessions, and meetings in this area since I was a kid. Yet, I never noticed the artwork. I began to have an interrogation with myself on it. "Why haven't I seen it before," "How long has it been up there," "Have I always thought they were just lights," and "Should I go take a view on it while it's dark"?

Afterwards, I started my car and went to the area. By the time I arrived it was dark, a bit chilly, with an empty parking lot. I was the only individual there, and when I stepped out of my car, I gazed at the artwork trying to perpetuate the meaning behind it. As I was doing so, I noticed they are structured as tear drops with only one row being lit. All while hearing police and

ambulance sirens on the other side of the area. I correlated the two to conclude the meaning behind this artwork.

The tears symbolized the community. The community goes through gloomy events everyday with losing things that have value such as opportunities, objects, and most importantly, the ones we love. I concluded the reason the artwork is at this location is diversity. Ever since I was a kid, I noticed the many diverse cultural people that visited the area. With Hispanics getting off work and drinking beer with their coworkers after a long day, with Arabs playing soccer out in the field with their friends and family, Black and White people playing Basketball inside, and everyone running outside to get in better shape. It felt like this artwork was demonstrating no matter what occurs in Antioch the community will continue being strong and unite with one another despite the differences we all have.

I went home to go back to the description and found out the creator of the artwork. The artist was Micahel Allison and the reason for his creation was because he felt devastated after the flooding that occurred in Nashville back in 2010. I was in 3rd grade during that time, and luckily, I lived up in a hill, but my dad's store did get damaged. It made me remember the stories I heard when I returned to school. My peers telling me how their basements got flooded, trailers were hard to live in, losing part of their homes, and their loved ones. It was a somber moment for us all during that time. Nevertheless, we continued to move forward and overcome the situation which is why in Michael words said. "These individual drops are all held together by galvanized, strong metal to represent this bond that held the community together in the aftermath of such tragedy."

I later went to research more on Michael, and found he owned a website displaying a gallery of his artwork. Michael's pattern is like none other with majority of his creation being

identical to teardrops coming out of faucets. Some are structured differently while others have a vibrant color that gives an immaculate look. Each gallery has a brief description on where and when he created it. I could not get enough of it, I wanted to learn more about Michael's public art and him, so I found his contact information and gave him a call. We talked for half an hour on conducting an interview soon, and luckily, he said yes. Before I go interview Michael, I went to get another look on the public art to see if I can gather anymore thoughts and ideas from it.

It's February 8, 2021 I arrived at Antioch Park at 9:46AM. This time, I wasn't alone. There were a few cars parked with people going for runs or walks with their friends. This time instead of looking at the artwork in one angle I decided to move from different angles to see if I would spot anything new. While I was doing so, I tried to utilize what I've been learning in class towards this artwork. I removed the mechanical mental labeling I've had for years and said to myself, "These aren't lights, what else could it be?". I couldn't think of anything at the moment, so I wrote down the question to ask Michael during the interview. In the meantime, I observed the area and background. That's when I noticed the background of the artwork looked like a wave which may correlate to the flood that occurred. The area was moving every second with the cars in traffic and people taking another step. Demonstrating Antioch continues to go on for every moment that goes on. It was time for me to conduct the interview with Michael.

Rayan: I had to dress professional as if we were doing this in person

Michael: Perfect, looking good!

Rayan: Thank you, First and foremost let me thank you for taking the time out of your day to help me conduct this interview and help me get the best grade I can get. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Michael: Michael Allison

Rayan: What do you do Michael?

Michael: I'm an artist.

Rayan: Ok. **Laughs**

Michael: Sorry.

Rayan: No, it's ok.

Rayan: I'm interviewing you today in regarding of the artwork you created called 'liquid 615' located right next to Antioch Middle School I have some questions to ask you today and I'll begin with the first question. What do you expect the audience to understand when viewing Liquid 615?

Micahel: That's a good question I think there were a lot of things to consider when doing a piece of public art. For one, the building and location is very important. The Public Art Metro Art council is very important. They have a lot of things they want the art to be such as durability, weatherproof, low maintenance, whether or not in needs a lot of maintenance cause once it's in the collection of the public art metro is responsible keeping up with the art looking art in any repairs it needs and the other thing was it was in memory of the 2010 flood that was so damaging, so I was in cooperating all of this into my idea when I created the piece, and I was hoping the public would see it view it and take away from it. Kinda the way the water level was way up there 30 feet 40 feet up on the building the way how it looks like a slight wave painted behind it and then all the water drops so that area was hit really hard. It was a exaggerated abstract version of how high the water got, but it still had that symbolize. Hopefully something we can look back on and at least it doesn't remind us of complete devastation and there was some beauty in the whole piece. There were people that came together, I'm hoping that we see the cup half full.

Rayan and Michael: **Laughs**

Rayan: I did notice the wave; I actually went there this morning to view the art once again for the second time, and I did notice a wave in the background. I didn't know if it was supposed to be intentional with the flood happening if it was that high, or demonstrating we have our ups and down

Michael: Yeah, absolutely.

Rayan: Another question I have for you is, what is it with one row being lit at night? You had the option to have it all lit at night.

Michael: Wait, it's not lit on both rows?

Rayan: It's just one row from what I seen.

Michael: Uh oh, well, I'm not sure what that's all about. I do know that they have had issues with the led maybe this is still the issue, and it still hasn't been fixed.

Rayan: So that wasn't intentional?

Michael: No, they're both supposed to be lit and that's not an easy height to **laughs** get up to it was a 40-foot boom lift that helped me get up there.

Rayan: Yeah, I bet, and I saw the wire attached to the building all the way on top.

Michael: Yep, I was on the roof up there on the 40-foot booms and it was put up in the next biggest rainstorm we had since 2010 and it was during the rain when I was putting it up.

Rayan: I know you were anxious when you were doing it.

Michael: Oh absolutely.

Rayan: I went to your website and viewed the artwork you created, and I noticed they all have similar structures with it coming out of the faucet. What is the origin to that?

Micahel: Ok, welp, just so you know as far as being an artist I have thousands of ideas, but it comes down to a signature your style as an artist that sets you apart if you have a style it's also recognizable as branding as well so as far as this idea. The idea was something I did come up with. I realized I can continue to play and expand upon this idea and make this a signature stylized. It also blended and cooperated all the things that I do together glass, metal, jewelry, foundry work with casting metal, so glass and metal marriage each other very well glass needs something to hold it metal does that really well this idea came to me through the process of playing with the glass pushing the boundaries of the glass and just finding beauty in the industrial revolution back in the 50's. Where this idea came from was when I was in a rural steel building at Birmingham Alabama that was closed down in WW2. The building was left exactly the way it was when it was closed down gloves on the floor and condiments still in this old fridge and the plant life taking back over the building in some places crumbling. Being in there this industrial iron where they cast industrial iron in this huge plant this industrial building, they had all this plumbing, and that plumbing was beautiful to me. The handles were like flowers, birds were nesting in the faucet like their nest tucked in the pipes and that was beautiful to me. The idea came to me in that moment where I was doing these things with glass that I loved about the liquidness of it, and I wanted to keep it in that form when its solid. Kind of like chuhooly does, it's very liquid looking when you look at his work at botanical garden at Cheek wood. That's what makes his work memorizing. The liquid quality cause that's what I see glass as. When I'm working it it's very liquid, so that's where the idea came from and goes back to why I felt it was a good idea to run with and play with. I'm now getting to the point where I think that I have exhausted the idea if that makes sense. There's so many ideas and you can take one idea and expand on that idea, expand on that idea, expand on that idea, and it just keeps evolving and

I wanted to take it and evolve it until I exhausted the idea so that I move on to other areas sculpturing glass. I'll always do this work, but as far as the playing side of it that's really where the art comes from. It's the playing then it becomes production, but the playing part it's been exhausted. I've come all the way with it and I'm proud. I'm proud to have seen where I took it to in the perseverance and time it took to get to that point.

Rayan: When you say expand the idea do you also mean expand the areas of it? By that I mean take it from state to state and eventually make it iconic.

Michael: I would love to! It's unfortunate being, look at it this way, a successful artist makes 30-40k a year so that's not very much money. If I only make 30-40K how do I hire somebody at \$15 an hour to be able to give them 30-40k a year it's just not possible. So as one person trying to do all these different things I'm limited to my time, and I'm limited to what I can actually accomplish without an influx on money, grants, public art. As far as getting my work out there, it has gone international it is getting a lot of recognition. What I would like to do is large scale public art, so that is in the future. I design my pieces now in my program, so I don't even need to be in front of my studio I can design it all skyscraper size on my computer then build it later. That's really a game changer with what I can do with this work a lot of my work now doing large in scale architecture work is possible now because of that. I do and would like to push that direction. At the moment just to be able to make my art there was no glass studio in Nashville, so I have opened the only glass studio in Nashville called 'Nashville GlassBlowing' I do a lot of classes, I do a lot of teaching just to keep the studio running. Which doesn't leave me much time to make my art which is why I built the studio to blow glass, so it's all good. I'm happy, I love teaching. I'm in no rush. I wish I can live to 300-500 years but that's not gonna happen maybe with some gene editing, but hopefully reincarnation I'll come back to make some

more art. Y'know? At this point I just keep biting off more and chew like hell and I recommend that to you too. Just keep chewing **Laughs** and bite off more than you can chew. I think it's a really good way to keep going man.

Rayan: You just said you wished you can live 300-500 more years, right? Now, do you believe that if your art will be here for that long, don't you feel like you'll be able to live here for that long cause it is a piece of your life, work, brain process, and everything?

Michael: That has never left my thoughts when I make my work. I started in jewelry. Now in jewelry, you don't glue your stones on your ring. It's gonna fall out one day **Laughs** you just don't use glue. That being said, that kind of mentality I've taken with all of my work there is no glue it's all mechanically mounted together so it will last time. Glass withstands the weather sun, rain, and steel does too. I do wanna create things that will continue to hopefully be appreciated in the future and taken care of it. It's ok if it's not, but that is the idea. I know my art will always live beyond me I mean you have cars still driving older than I am. That's never left my thought, but not in the sense that I'm not able to get done what I really want to do. I got a lot of ideas, so if I could just live a little bit longer, I think I can make a lot more happen. Besides, as an artist coming from no money it takes you so long, well in my particular case I don't paint. The structure and the equipment it takes, I've been learning how to build all my life really and here I am with a 3000 square foot studio, hundreds and thousands of dollars' worth of equipment that I built. All of these skills behind me as an electrocutioner plumber because I had to learn how to do that, so I would have to do that all over again in another life or what not. If I could just live a little bit longer, I got a sketchbook full of ideas. I can keep artist busy with their own and other ideas which I have done before. My inspiration is contagious. I'm inspired by other artists and other artists are inspired by me, and some of those ideas I give to other artist are able to continue

on doing themselves just running along with those ideas and vice versa that is the beauty of sharing as an artist because ideas are..... infinite.

Rayan: Wow, that was... beautiful.

Micahel: Thank you.

Rayan: You know I never thought of it like that. Whenever I hear and see people steal my ideas, I just think they're not being original, but you just changed my perspective on that.

Michael: It does hurt it's not easy someone mimicking your work.

Rayan: What do you hope for people to see when looking at any of your art?

Michael: A lot of it is a capture of a moment. It's like a frozen moment at time. Y'know, water freezing at the moment. I think that we are so busy it's nice is if you could just take that moment and just go "ah, that's beautiful". Like looking at the sky and taking a deep breath saying, "ah, that's beautiful". That pause that brief moment of meditation is so important and healthy, and that's kinda what I want people to take away I hope it takes away their attention for more than just a moment and makes them contemplate and hopefully enjoy that moment of creativity and playfulness to just experience it for what it is and let everything else go what you're thinking about. Those brief moments can really rejuvenate us especially when it's magical and creative keep your mind creative. Ideas are the future; ideas are so important.

Rayan: It's ironic because the first time I looked at Liquid 615 was at night. Behind all those trees I heard sirens, horns from cars, and the wind. I was connecting your art work with everything I was hearing and all the cars moving and how you were saying to just pause and look at it. That's how I was when I was in the atmosphere, I was just staring at it. Despite hearing all the sirens, I was just gazing at your artwork thinking what the meaning behind it is, thinking

someone took effort to this, someone had to get approval for it and put it all together with their ideas and thoughts.

Michael: Beautiful, perfect! That's more than I can ever ask for it doesn't matter if you like it or you don't. Just to be able to be in that moment and take it all in. Hopefully it inspires you or makes you feel good walking away.

Rayan: It definitely does, I have been going there for quite some time since I was a child, and seeing the diversity in the area you got Hispanics, Arabs, whites, blacks, and Asians. I just saw it as all of the Antioch community coming as one.

Michael: Beautiful, I was really happy to put it in an area full of diversity.

Rayan: Is there anything else you feel to tell the audience or my professor reading this?

Michael: Look me up, on Nashville Glassblow and come take a class. Come enjoy the aw of glass. I think we're all artist, we're all creative people, we all have ideas, these ideas are the future, we are the future. That's it.

Rayan: Thank you so much Michael for the time and effort today I can't thank you enough for. I'll definitely look out for your artwork in the future. Have a great day ahead of you.

Michael: My pleasure, good luck.

Talking one on one with Michael was an experience I won't ever forget. He changed my point of view with seeing his artwork, and the atmosphere around me. I believe his artwork can change the way we all view our atmosphere. I'm hoping to see more creations from him on his Instagram. Thank you, Michael.

Check out Michael Allsion here:

Instagram:

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