

THE CREATIVE CURRENT

Passion not pushing fuels Bella Torunski's art



Artist Bella Torunski.



By Vanessa Coplan

“...when producing art you must work on whatever you are feeling the most passionate about in the moment.”

Bella Torunski

Bella is a Grade 12 student at Richard Pfaff Alternative High School. She is also an artist. She is preparing her art portfolio for next year, and will be applying to Concordia for Fine Arts.

Bella has been pursuing creative activities since grade school. She was a competitive dancer and since then she has turned her attentions to visual arts and business. In Bella's words, “as I grew up I moved to fashion and started my own online business, designing and reworking clothing, which I am still doing today. My first online venture was called Thrift Street Clothing. Now it is Curse Clothing. I then moved into more art-making including painting, print making and graffiti.”

In her Curse Clothing line, Bella paints and draws on clothing. Her

goal is to make these pieces powerful one of a kind statements that make the wearer stand out. Her clothing designs are a kind of meeting place where graffiti art meets fashion.

In her graffiti art Bella uses traditional materials such as spray paint, stencils and markers. It is also imbued with her personal messages and illustrations to create non-conventional graffiti art. About this style of art making Bella says, “lots of my graffiti pieces use parts and features of the human body and face mixed with parts of nature such as plants and animals to show connections between all living things.”

When I asked Bella what inspires her artistic subject matter she spoke of her interest in challenging societal norms and expectations of what is beautiful and acceptable and what is “gross,” or ugly or scary by seeing the opposite characteristic in each attribute. She illustrates these ideas by using the living world, humans, plants and animals as well as what makes up these biological entities,

in the form of cells and molecular structures to show the similarities and connectedness between all living things. She often distorts her subject matter to make the familiar disfigured, thus rendering the known image unfamiliar or dystopic and in so doing asking the viewer to question the notion of beauty, identity and reality.

When we got to discussing the importance of cultivating, nurturing and sustaining creative pursuits, Bella explained creativity as a passion sustained throughout her life. In her words, “I am drawn to creative expression. It benefits every aspect of my life such as my mental health, my relationship with others and it has helped me learn more about myself. Without creative expression I wouldn't be me. I'd have no goals for my future and no passion. It would be a world without colour.”

Is hindsight possible at 17? For Bella it is. When I asked her about any advice she would give her past self, she said she would tell herself to “stop being so hard on (her)self. That you are putting 100% effort into what you are doing and that's all you can give.” Presently Bella is working on not losing sight of her goals, and not letting temporary distractions affect her future aspirations. These future goals

include staying motivated by trying new things, and being brave with her work and everyday life.

For Bella the importance of her artwork is linked to a desire to learn more about herself through creative expression, and to communicate her views and messages through her art.

A day in the life

Bella has a very clear vision of what her ideal day would look like:

She would spend her morning on commissions including tattoo designs, graffiti murals, illustrations and paintings. Her afternoons would be devoted to designing clothing in the studio of her clothing store.

Words to live by according to Bella

“The best art comes from passion and not from pushing”

I would add that living our best lives comes from that very same sentiment. Amen.

Vanessa Coplan is an artist, art teacher, creative coach and a resident of OOS.

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