

Artist Statement: 26th Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners

Artist Name: Carsten

I had been toying with the idea to make a fundamental shift in my style, but I wanted to continue to work with paper. I love the physical touch and the ability to manipulate the paper. And so I started to play around with strips of paper and bunching them together, gluing them on their edge and thus creating patches of color. I could then lay those into patterns. I started to create pieces and to alter the bunches into rolls and spirals. To be honest, I thought I had created a new and unique style, but I soon learned it was called "Quilling" and has been around since before the Renaissance. I even read that Marie Antoinette used to create pieces and when done set them on fire. [In a way I like that idea. Art ought to be like throwing a rock in a lake. It briefly makes waves and soon all signs of it are gone. And so I hope that the reason for my LGBTQART pieces will soon disappear too and future generations will know nothing of the pain and struggle.]

Working with paper like I do - cutting, rolling, and gluing it for hours - is my meditation. I shut off my TV and listen to my favorite music while I sit Indian style on my bunk for hours and hours. For the past two years I have been exclusively listening to ABBA and the Cranberries. Their music puts me in a sort of trance and I often lose hours while I work and daydream. During this pandemic my art has been a blessing and has saved my sanity. I hope that people will get as much joy out of my art as I had creating it, I hope I was able to store some good energy in them for the people who'll give them a good home.

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"Leafy Sea Dragon - Craig"

The Leafy Sea Dragon is the first XXL piece I have made in my new Quilling style. It is also the first piece in which I rolled a 2nd. color inside a swirl, thus creating a dual-colour effect. I actually used exclusively dual-colour swirls. I had a hard time with all the apendages, I wanted them to taper off and give a see-through effect. I did not manage that, so instead I used fabric for the "fluttery" parts.

The Leafy Sea Dragon looks very fragile and whispy with all the protrusions, but I think the colour scheme is absolutely gorgeous. Craig looks absolutely ephemeral and is a vision in pastels. I think Craig needs a lovely home in someone's bedroom or meditation room.

I no longer sign my pieces, instead I added a "signature coin" that spells out my name. Cyan, Aquamarine, Raspberry, Salmon, Tangerine, Evergreen, and Nut

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"Sand Hill Crane"

For the Sand Hill Crane I wanted to recreate the blue/gray feather look that a Sand Hill Crane sports.

In addition to that I also wanted to experiment with the colors being faded from dark to light. I like the movement of this piece and it all came out great.

I again employed the technique of rolling one colour into another, a technique that nearly triples the time it takes to roll each piece, but in the end it was worth it.

I wanted to make a Sand Hill Crane because I believe them to be gorgeous and majestic birds, plus I thought my two-colour technique would lend it-self perfectly to this project.

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"Swantje"

I love this piece - it is both tranquil and tripy. I saw a photo of a swan and its reflection, that triggered me to create "Swantje" [dutch: swan] I went away from simply creating a wonky reflection and instead made the reflection a sleeping swan. Once again I used the double colour technique, but I used two whites to give it a fuller plumage. I believe this piece would look stunning in someone's bedroom - it looks so tranquil. I truly enjoyed creating this piece, it gave me an inner peace. I hope that someone will give it a good home and enjoy it for years to come.

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"Portrait of an idiot, a self-portrait"

I have been wanting to create a self-portrait for a while by now, and I have finally gotten my head around the idea. I had the idea for depicting my hearing loss as a "black hole", and I used a piece of paper clip to symbolize my hearing aid. Of course I had to include a facemask, we have been wearing them for two years by now, but a face mask cannot shut up an artist. I included the German colors, as well as the orange and blue of a prisoner uniform. I filled my head space with the rainbow colors of different shapes, styles, and heights, as well as a pink triangle on the breast, something used by the Nazis to mark gays. And finally the black glasses which anchor my face. Those are just a few of the things that make me who I am these days, a tiny part... for it is impossible to show memory. I no longer sign my pieces, instead I added a "signature coin" that spells out my name. Cyan, Aquamarine, Raspberry, Salmon, Tangerine, Evergreen, and Nut.

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