

RICK BEGNEAUD

TEXTURE + COLOR... A UNIQUE COLLAGE

CAITLIN FIRMAGE, ADRIENNE FOLEY, ANNA GARFINK, LIZZIE LITTMAN, SARAH MOSES, MADDY SUENNEN AND SARAH WEITZMAN

DRAKE HIGH, HALL MIDDLE, MARIN HORIZON, MILL VALLEY MIDDLE AND TAMALPAIS HIGH SCHOOLS

NEW STUDENT COLLAGES INSPIRED BY OUR VISIT TO RICK BEGNEAUD'S STUDIO.

Plums and paintbrushes: two of the ingredients in the recipe to create a Begneaud masterpiece. Other ingredients include an open airy studio, an endless supply of vivid and colorful fabrics, a heavy glue called matte medium, music softly playing in the background, and a pair of pants that can be stained. With these elements in place, renowned artist Rick Begneaud is ready to delve into the creative process.

At first glance, Rick Begneaud seems like a typical artist, for he obliges the unspoken dress code of the creative genius—paint-stained pants, plaid shirt, flip-flops, glasses and a bandana to keep the unruly mop of curly black hair out of his face. But soon you'll find he is anything but typical. In his works, blindingly bright paints are layered with unusual pieces of fabric, from delicate vintage lace to understated woven scraps. Indeed, fabrics are an essential part of almost every one of his gorgeous pieces. "I don't really have a favorite type of fabric, but people might say it's polka

dots. I do like them and use them quite a lot!" he says, smiling, in his sunlit Sausalito studio.

The best part of the artistic process for Rick is when he gets in "the zone"—those moments when the vision travels almost effortlessly from his brain to the canvas. "Some days I just come in here and stay all day," he says. "The hardest part," though, according to Rick, "is getting started. Pardon the pun, but sometimes I just get painted into a corner."

Following the wise words of the great Picasso, he handles this problem by covering up the part of the piece he likes the best and seeking new perspectives from the troublesome area.

Rick's art derives from a burning curiosity with regard to everyday objects, whether it be a piece of particularly intriguing fabric or a stark blank canvas. He cites two central inspirations that led him to convert this curiosity into a career: his uncle, the legendary Robert Rauschenberg, and his time exploring the art and culture of West Africa.

LIZZIE LITTMAN



SARAH MOSES



DEANNA BEAMAN





Back row, Left to right: Lizzie Littman, Ann Garfink, and Caitlin Firmage; Front, left to right: Adrienne Foley, Sarah Weitzman, Artist Rick Begneaud, Sarah Moses and Maddy Suennen.

Rick's relationship to Rauschenberg was complex. Living in the shadow of such a great artist led the young artist to initially believe he was not talented. Never wanting his art to be compared to his famed uncle's work, Rick grew up as what he calls a "closet artist" in the southern United States. Yet he also loved to watch his uncle work with various mediums, and learned from him the lesson that continues to drive his art. "He taught me to look at the world in a different way, from a different perspective," Rick recalls fondly. Taking this to heart, he first began to explore his own creative ability in his late teens, testing the boundaries of the deeply Cajun-influenced art of southern Louisiana.

Two trips to West Africa greatly expanded Rick's artistic vision. On his visits to Mali and Burkina Faso, the curious artist would visit local tailor shops. Entranced by the rustic, bleached trimmings of fabrics blanketing the floor, he brought many scraps home with him to incorporate into his pieces. He was inspired by the history each scrap had been through, and felt he could build them into his paintings. Begneaud also recently found a new direction for his pieces from his travels. Utilizing some of the photographs he captured in West Africa, he brushed parts of the images onto a canvas, then surrounded the partial photographs with colors

and fabrics. Rick revealed to us some of these works in progress at his studio. The effect achieved was beautiful, with the vivid paint bringing out the nuances of the striking images.

After the interview, we were especially excited that Rick had cleared the table for us with his multi-colored pile of fabric scraps and an array of paints for us to make our own collages. We reveled in playing around, layering pieces of fabrics one by one on top of each other, carefully juxtaposing color and texture, getting our compositions just right— and we also added paint. It was a cool experience to be invited into Rick's studio and have him encourage us to get creative. We proudly held our paintings up, knowing they would be a constant reminder of how fun it is to let go, be creative and try your hand at something new.

Always pushing the limits, Rick's use of photographs and fabric in his paintings converts his uncle's theory into practice: he employs different perspectives to view basic objects as pieces of art. We were honored to be invited to his studio to see his works-in-progress, and excited by the new directions he is exploring. We can't wait to see what comes next from this fascinating artist!

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