

Alex Kuhn

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The work of Alex Kuhn explores the boundaries between realistic and abstract. His use of monochromatic and vibrant color, work alongside one another to illustrate a world of natural forms and subjects, which explore the absurdities of birth, life, nature, perception, dreams, and death.

Alex's work is created using a combinations of techniques including painting, pyrography, illustration, and woodcarving. The lesser known of these is pyrography or "writing with fire." Pyrography is the method of burning wood with heated metal or open flame for the purposes of creating a design. For Alex, this technique is the foundation from which all of his other techniques and styles are born. All of the pieces Alex makes seek to find a harmony between the monochromatic tones of burned wood, and the use of vibrant paint. Unlike painting or drawing where the medium covers the canvas, in pyrography, the burned wood and the canvas are one and the same.

In addition to the realistic natural subject matter which explores the themes of life & death, Alex seeks to further his story through the meaning of the mediums he uses to create. Just as his subject matter comes alive within the boundaries of the canvas, the tree from which the wood canvas is made returns to life through the process of burning. Fire is a tool of destruction, but within Alex's world, fire is used as a tool of creation and a means to give the tree a chance to re-represent itself in the world where it once lived.

Each piece Alex creates represents meticulous research and planning to achieve a level of realistic imagery. His focus in creation is first to study and memorize forms through sketch. From there, he designs his work mentally and reworks it to reach the essence of his idea. Once he begins, Alex knows exactly what the piece will look like, yet he has never drawn it together to completion. Through memorizing forms such as directional flow of animal fur, leaf shape, bark texture, or color pattern, Alex is able to let the work flow from him naturally, without concern of accuracy of subject matter.

Due to the slow and accurate process of burning, pieces created can take upwards of 200 hours of dedicated focus and steadiness of hand. Unlike pencil or paint, you cannot cover over or erase burned wood. A burned section of wood is burned forever. Because of this, Alex practices his ability to focus through meditation, study, and observational sketch. For Alex, this method of focus is akin to that of the Renaissance. Artists then worked for hours and hours and their work was rooted in craftsmanship and skill rather than ability to derive conceptual ideas, a trait which has become more idealized in contemporary art.

Although similar is pursuit to the Renaissance, Pyrography as an art has never become widely popular, nor has it been viewed as "fine art" in the way that painting or sculpture has been. Curious enough, Pyrography as a technique is not new in any sense, rather it has been used by a number of cultures since the dawn of recorded history. For Alex, this is important because although his work is contemporary in style, pyrography as a technique is as ancient as civilization itself.

Alex believes that Art has an immense and unexplored power - The ability to transmit a complex set of ideas through simple visual stimuli to people regardless of language, ethnicity, or age. His goal in creating his work is to explore these functions and refine them over time in order to streamline his communication of thought, and his artworks' ability to visually teach concepts to the viewer.