

Marc Morin

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Graduate Independent Studio Project I

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Residency Summary: Group 1

The ten-day residency that I took part in this January was insightful and challenging. I enjoyed meeting the other students and seeing their work, and feel that we have a strong group, both in terms of talent and connection. I found the residency very helpful for my own development as an artist, particularly due to the information and feedback I received from the faculty and my classmates on my work.

The work that I presented during the critiques included mostly landscapes with figures present or absent in the space. They were of different sizes, mediums and finishes, and some were part of completed bodies of work while others were studies for future projects. I was encouraged that the themes that I intended to portray in my work were effectively communicated to the audience. In particular, some of the descriptive words that came up throughout the critiques included dark, moody, dream-like, landscape of the mind, sweet sadness, ethereal, mysterious, isolated, and non-coherent narrative. These are all terms that I have explored in my work, both in the past and present. After all of the critiques, essentially two views were established: experiment in a completely different and unfamiliar direction or delve deeper into exploring my current themes and style and find living artists that are making similar work.

The idea of working in a completely different theme or style has given me mixed emotions. On one hand, it does sound exciting to let go and try something new when I have a supportive artistic community beside me. If there is a time to do it, it seems like these first two semesters would be ideal. However, on the other hand, I worry that it could be distracting from the themes that I am most interested in and excited about, and may not necessarily build upon the body of work that I see myself making long term. I am open to the idea, but if I choose to go the experimental route, I would feel most comfortable knowing that it could inform my skill and development in all areas of my work.

The other recommendation I received, which centered on working within my current themes, but pulling the imagery explicitly from my head, is something that I can definitely see myself doing. I have resisted the idea in the past because I felt that there is a negative connotation towards work that does not represent something in the natural world. I have also lacked the confidence in myself to share work that is strictly from my head. I understand that all two dimensional images are abstract, but being able to say that a given image pulls some of its character from a particular building or familiar landmark has allowed for a space between myself and the work. To make something completely of my own imagination makes me feel somewhat vulnerable and more exposed. However, I feel that the suggestion to research and learn about other artists making similar work, such as the Tonalist and Symbolist painters, would alleviate some of the apprehension I have.

Overall, while I do appreciate and find the idea of doing something totally out there to be a fun challenge, and may do so if I feel I need to balance out my other work, I

continue to be drawn to the idea of further exploring my familiar themes in the absence of natural world references. I would like to look inward and find what tropes or visual statements are repeated and possibly what they mean to me. I understand that my internal world is the product of the culture and environment in which I was raised, and while I do not long for the past nor wish for the future, I hope to make work that reflects the moment that I am in.

Moving forward, there are a number of projects that I am eager to begin working on. One of these projects includes learning more about the 19th century Tonalism and Symbolist movements, which are styles of painting that invoke mood and atmosphere in dream-like imagery, as I intend to do. Specifically, I am interested in learning about the history of these styles in the art world, as well as their relevance today, including who are the current artists working in this manner. I also plan to begin creating more paintings and drawings that portray images from my head, including landscapes, figures, and any other imagery that comes up. Also, I plan to continue experimenting with and mastering techniques to portray the moody and ethereal qualities that I enjoy seeing and creating. I look forward to seeing where my experimental work takes me and to receiving feedback during the critiques in June.