

Stickman Daydreams

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Abstract

When you think of comics, you likely think of the highly detailed works of Marvel and DC or even the slightly washed-out colors in the Sunday papers. You may even think stickman, and if that's the case, then you've come to the right place. We have taken the art of comic making and simplified it into the most basic form possible. However, the question is, is it more or less challenging to convey a message? We found out, for better or for worse, that conveying emotion and meaning from nothing but lines and squiggles was quite the challenge, but we sure had fun doing it. Here, we have a collection of comics exploring everything from an awkward encounter in a tight hallway to the implications of needless competition.

Jake - Introduction

One day, I was sitting in my room on my bed doing nothing, which is the perfect situation for a bright idea to manifest itself. I sat there on my bed some more, and then the idea came to me: Make a comic, but not just any comic, a stickman comic. I grabbed my notebook and my pencil, opened it up, went to a page, and put pencil to paper. What I was drawing, I had no idea, there was no plan, no climax, and no ending, but the next thing I knew, those things were discovered for themselves. The next thing I knew, a story had unfolded through the lead of my pencil, with little consultation to myself. I stared at the creation for minutes and said to myself, “Wow, I really can’t draw”, but a thought occurred to me: I know someone who can.

The next day, I got lunch with my friend Claudia and was excited to show her

what I had made. She took my notebook from me, looked at the cover, opened it to the first page of the comic, read the comic, and looked up at me. Then, without malice, said, “Wow, you really can’t draw.” I nodded without shame. Then, white light passed in front of Claudia’s face, and she leaned in and said, “I bet I could do it better.”

Claudia - Introduction

One day, I was getting lunch with my friend Jake when he excitedly showed me a comic he had drawn in his notebook. Upon observation, I could tell that the story was there, but the artistic talent was lacking. I looked at him and said, “Wow, you really can’t draw.” Then, a white light passed in front of my face as an amazing idea manifested itself to me. “I bet I can do it better.” I put the journal into my bag, got up from the couch, went to my secret studio (where creativity is abundant and inspiration

is endless), and began drawing. What I ended up with was not just any comic. It was a stickman comic.

Jake - Creative Process

What is creativity but a series of spontaneous bursts of inspiration that compile themselves into a series of comprehensible symbols? My creative process is very moment to moment, where inspiration comes from conversation, and execution comes from solitude. I take the things that I see or hear from the day and mold them into a creative output that has meaning and has the ability to make meaning for all. I try to tell a story with each piece that weaves complex social issues into a rather simple format. Take the comic about a wormhole on a coffee table that cleans the caked-on blood from the carpet that one of the stickman's stickgrandmother died on. This is a compelling story about death and the grief that follows death, that grieving is a process that can be both spontaneous and prolonged. There is rhyme and reason to my creative process, but even I don't know when something rhymes; all I know is when I finish on time.

Claudia - Artistic Process

The artistic process involved in creating a stickman comic is not as simple as drawing a stickman. Once the initial idea is conceived, a rough version of the comic is drawn. The main goal with these rough versions is translating the far-fetched idea, which at this point has only existed in the mind, and putting it onto a piece of paper. Jake and I review this rough version to decide what is working, what needs to be changed, and what is going to be emphasized. Within each comic, there is one object that is inked in red marker, rather than black. The red object is particularly important as it indicates the Dionysian force (see next section) present within each comic. Whether it is a blood splotch on a carpet, a

hunk of raw, juicy meat, or a glowing tip of a cigarette, it reminds us that the spontaneity of life can abruptly come to an end. Although the Dionysian force exists within each comic, it is contained by the neat and orderly frames of each scene.

Apollonian and Dionysian

That was how it started, this foolish dream of ours, to create compelling stories using stick figures and symbolism that would capture the forces of order and chaos as described by Friedrich Nietzsche as Apollonian and Dionysian forces. According to Nietzsche, there are two opposing forces in art that contradict each other yet still manage to work in accordance with one another to create harmony and balance. Nietzsche believes that the purest forms of art are when these two forces are each pulling for the viewer's attention, but also relenting their loose grasp. The Apollonian force craves order and harmony; it believes that purity is the highest form of life and that the pursuit of purity is the only aspiration deemed worthy of living (Chaliakopoulos, 2022). The Dionysian force craves chaos and primordial unity; it desires a world that runs on madness and authenticity regardless of the consequences that authenticity promotes. The Dionysian force also longs for a return to the natural chaos of the world, where one's fate is determined by the forces that are without bounds around them.

Conclusion

Stickman Daydreams is a meditation on the Apollonian and Dionysian forces in art. The Apollonian force in art craves structure and order and rebels against anything that threatens to break that order. The Dionysian forces in art crave a return to primordial apparition and manifestation of natural emotions and desires. To pair these two forces is to create a full piece of art that explores the complexities of human nature and desire.

References

Chaliakopoulos, A. (2022). *What is the apollonian and dionysian in Nietzsche's philosophy?* The Collector. <https://www.thecollector.com/nietzsche-philosophy-apollonian-dionysian/>

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