



## **5 Minutes with Elbow-Toe** Gary Shove

### **How do you feel right now?**

It's rather cold here in Brooklyn at the moment. I believe you would say I am freezing my ass off.

### **Why do you paint?**

I like solitary work. And I find it the clearest method for expressing my thoughts. And I love color, and being able to control the way a person experiences a public space or a panel in a gallery.

### **What are you currently obsessed with?**

Collaging. It is all I am doing 12 hours a day, 7 days a week.

### **How does your past career influence your work?**

I used to be a programmer, and I think they both fed each other. The spontaneity of my image making made me program better and the skills I developed building complex structures in programming affect the way that I construct imagery.

### **How would you say your art has progressed over the years?**

I think I have found a few mediums that I really like. I also have been so thankful for the creation of cheap and powerful digital cameras. I used to work strictly from life, often using myself as the model for the gestures that I would build upon other characters. Now I take pictures from several different angles and am able to simulate the live experience, which also allows me to be able to afford the models.

### **Name one street artist you can't get enough of and explain why.**

I would say Specter. There are few street artists that I feel actually have affected the way I see. I can't help thinking of him every time I see a homeless man with a cart. It's uncanny.

### **How much thought goes into your work?**

There is quite a bit of thought, but it is balanced by working from intuition.

**How would you define “street art?” And how do you view it’s connection with ‘graffiti’**

Today’s street art seems for the most part to be primarily figurative. There are some wonderful artists that are operating more abstractly, but for the most part it is character based. I know some people feel they are reclaiming public space. I myself see it as transforming public space. And most of that “public space” are other people’s buildings, truth be told. So the moral high ground argument does not do it for me, but if it makes people want to go out and create, more power to them. I would say formally it’s connections stem out of the idea of getting your art seen in a very public way.

**What does it mean to sell-out?**

I guess I would classify the act of selling out as putting your own vision aside in an attempt to cater to what you think people want.

**What is authenticity? What does it mean to keep it real?**

In art, authenticity is being true to your vision, figuring out what you do that no one else can do. For example, say the rest of an art movement is heading in one direction, but you have a very specific voice. You can certainly learn from it, perhaps add it as a layer, but not to the extent of diluting what you have to say.

**Describe your process.**

For my street work, I have settled into 2 sort of modes. The first are large-scale woodcuts that I print and hand color, and then paste. The other mode, and where I see the street work for me going is hand painted charcoal drawings, that I paste up. I really hate carving and repetition bores me to tears.

I also write poetry and draw on structures with oil bars.

For the gallery, I think of them as cut paper paintings. I create a very detailed drawing on a panel, that serves as a roadmap, and then I comb through magazines and hand-made paper for just the right colors, which I cut out with an xacto knife. I then glue it onto the panel. The markmaking of the paper looks deceptively like paint.

**Is there such a thing as ‘bad’ art? What is it? Name names.**

I don’t want to go down the good/bad debate, since so much of it is subjective. I can on the other hand tell you what bores me: street-art of celebrities. It for the most part requires little or no creativity, and often is just a tool to have people instantly recognize it. We have a whole industry dedicated to celebrity culture, and half of it gets pasted on the walls as ads already. Please, I implore you: make something personal.

**Do street artists make ethical choices in what they do, where they do it and how?**

I know for myself there are certain places that I put work. And there are places I won’t such as churches, schools or residences. I would also hope that people are thoughtful enough that they aren’t endangering people with their art. It is after all art that operates in a public space, you don’t want to jeopardize the public by your actions.

**Everything is about fear or desire. Which one interests you more?**

Fear interests me more, because one has to constantly push against it. I find that desire has such forward momentum that it is easier to be complacent within it.

**The last great piece of work you saw was what, by whom and how did it make you feel?**

I recently saw a show of works by Gabriel Crozco at the MoMA. His work is exceptionally simple and conceptual. My favorite piece was a white shoebox. I believe it was originally exhibited in an empty gallery, and would occasionally get kicked, by

people that did not really notice it. Its position in the space completely transformed the space, like a successful dancer can.

**Can good art be political? Can political art be good?**

I believe it can, particularly if the artist is addressing issues that are more general, as they will have a longer life.

**What is good art? What is good street-art?**

Good art is art that you can't stop thinking about the day after you have seen it. Good street-art is art that changed your experience of either the subject or the environment in which it operates, so that you can't help but see it through the artists eyes from then on.

**Who has got completely the wrong end of the stick recently?**

The Haitians, for far too long.

**Where is it all going?**

I don't rightly know. Though I feel like every thing is speeding up.

**Where are you going?**

I am primarily focused on a solo show I am doing at Black Rat Projects in London this fall. When I get done with that I will return to the streets with what I am sure will be a renewed vigor. There is something wonderful about working on studio work. It becomes about the world of the studio. Getting back into street-art is always like a cold bath where you suddenly get woken up to the world outside of yourself.

**Is street-art a social activity?**

It certainly can be, though I find myself to be a bit of a loner when it comes to going out.

**What albums are you listening to at the moment?**

John Coltrane (Afro Blue), Sigur Ros – (Meo Suo I Syrum Vic Spilum Endalaust), Great Lake Swimmers (Lost Channels), Jaydiohead (Jaydiohead), anything by Radiohead and Tom Waits.