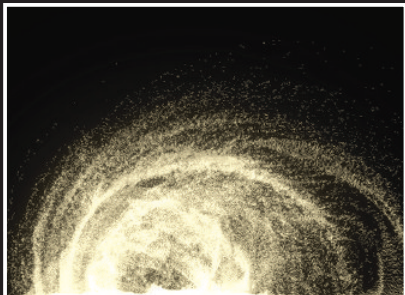


Meet the Artist of the Month



To see some great artists go to www.artgalleryofstalbort.ca

The story of Brad Neczyk's rise into art starts in his childhood though things didn't really jump into gear until he worked at a bank handing out mortgages in his early 20s. When the market crashed in 2008, he walked away.

"I didn't want to be part of that. I wanted to do something more meaningful with my life for myself personally. I wasn't particularly good at art necessarily. It was maybe like a calling. I don't know. It was just the sensation: let's go make art for a while. And then it worked out," he explained.

Now a renowned intermedia artist with a Governor General's Gold Medal, Neczyk maintains that his parents first instilled in him an appreciation and encouragement for the arts while offering a resolute acknowledgement to U of A Fine Arts instructor Royden Mills for fully inspiring him and helping him to find his artistic voice and passion.

He still credits Mills as his constant mentor though one can't deny that Neczyk is well onto his own incredible artistic path. One look at this CV on his website (at bradneczyk.com) shows a vibrant series of solo art exhibits across Canada, group exhibits across North America, and experimental film screenings all around the world. There's also a few collaborations with dance companies, that play he wrote, and some unique residencies in Argentina, New York, and elsewhere.

His most recent show called And All of Everything, an immersive and collaborative exhibit with audio magician and sound designer Gary James Joynes, was intended to open at the Art Gallery of St. Albert this month. It has been postponed until 2022.

Unfortunate as that might be, Neczyk remains pleased that it's the right thing to do and things will work out for the best in the long run. This optimism reflects a theme that recurs in much of his work, a theme that not only distinguishes it from other artists but one that also acts as a larger social force. It talks about his mental health and, in



doing so, it says that everyone should be talking about their own mental health.

That goes back to his time in banking as well. Something was wrong and it was more than just not fitting in. He spent his years getting his BFA trying to make art and understand what he was going through. Somewhere in the middle of that degree is when he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder.

"My BFA was the time just to figure out what I was going through as a young adult living with mental illness. I didn't know what that was at the time. No one really talked about it too much at the time either in the late 2000s," he continued, recalling a Van Gogh exhibit that his dad took him to as a teenager that deeply resonated with him. His work, in turn, resonates with many others, too.

"Art has also become a lot about making meaning out of these really challenging experiences that you go through. When you're living with mental health problems, it's a very meaningful thing that you're going through because it's

there. It's just so present and it feels so strongly in your psyche. Art has been probably one of the most therapeutic parts of my entire life."

Neczyk says that the sense he gets from many viewers of his work who have their own psychological struggles is that they've been seen, that their experiences have been validated, and that maybe they're not as alone as they maybe thought they might be.

It's a strong reassurance of the power of art as a therapeutic practice for Brad Neczyk and a healing message for viewers.

This special feature runs once a month and highlights a local artist from the region. By Scott Hayes.

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