Mark Rodriguez on Monday Motivation

When life itself seems lunatic, who knows where madness lies?

I recently created an image that I have wanted to create for almost of my entire life. Let me explain.

Growing up, we had in our house a slender, wooden statue of Don Quixote that stood on a small table near my room. I was always fascinated by the statue and more so the story of Don Quixote as a man of great imagination and conviction, a man of determination despite his ultimate shortcomings and a man who was unafraid to put everything he had into his ideals. I see a lot of myself in him, right along with the questionable sanity part, and it is in his spirit of unbridled imagination that I feel I am able to peel away the “real world” and bring about much of the art I create and along with Don Quixote, I also have my parents to thanks for this.

My parents were always supportive of my creative ventures and never tried to steer me away from pursuing them. They encouraged me to do my art from an early age and I have them to thank for giving me that freedom and allowing my imagination to evolve and prosper. As I grew older I started buying porcelain figures of Don Quixote for my parents, perhaps as a subliminal way of thanking them for allowing me to pursue the windmills in my head and tilt the great beasts

and they always loved receiving them.

Many years ago I had a vision of him I wanted to create but only if I felt I could do it the justice it deserved as I felt it was to be one of the most important and personal images I might ever create as an homage to my parents based off of this literary adventurer…. so the challenge was on to do it!

I feel patience and research is often times an artist's greatest strength and I know for myself, I will slowly acquire what I need for a shot or create it from scratch spending whatever time necessary in the process. As a result of this, over time I slowly shot the necessary images that would compose of the background through my travels: a winding path down the backside of Mt.Tamalpais, a windmill near the end of Golden Gate park in San Francisco, and a rocky pass in central Ireland.

The next part was creating the elements of his armor. I was not able to find his signature helmet anywhere online, so I made one out of a piece of luan wood and one of our mixing bowls (please, no one tell my wife, ok?) using some texturing techniques to age it and make it look rusted as his armor was not new and shiny by any means. The body armor was actually a rubbery chest plate from a roman gladiator costume that looked a bit fake, however I knew I could change it how I wanted in

Adobe Photoshop to get the look I wanted. I rounded out the armor with a pair of old leather welding gloves and a dowel rod to represent his lance.

Whenever I shoot I try to get the look I want, but also get other emotions in case I might want options later when I go to edit. Knowing how I wanted the composition I did know that being offset from the lens was key to the final image and details like that is key to getting a believable final edit. Because the subject was to be set outside in a somewhat overcast environment, I tried to get an even, ambient look to the lighting with only subtle shadows, again knowing what type setting you are putting the subject into is key to how you light them and the believability of the final image.

I often times shoot hundreds of variations of a pose/look to ensure I have what I need for my final edit so once I felt had enough to work with in the way of range of emotions it was off to Photoshoplandia to put all the pieces together.

Once in photoshop, I did things like mix the background elements together, battered the windmills, tattered the armor, and overall blend everything into one cohesive composite.

I was very pleased with the final results and feel it is a fitting tribute to my parents from whom I derived the strength to do anything I put my mind to. So in the final image – unlike in the original story – it is clear that Don Quioxte is indeed defeating all the windmills he has come across as he readies himself for the next one to challenge as this is how I often times see myself. I love a good challenge, even if the challenge is all in my head, and I am always sizing up my imagination to see just what new Quixotic adversary I will be tilting next.

Will it some day lead me to my own insanity much like Don Quixote? Will this endless pursuit break my soul? Who knows? But what I do know is I will continue to pursue my passion to create art for as long as I am still breathing

To see a speed edit of this image check it out on my YouTube channel here.

Many thanks to Mark for a great dose of motivation with this insight into his creative flow! You can learn more about Mark Rodriguez by clicking through to his website, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Google+.

https://layersmagazine.com/mark-rodriguez-on-monday-motivation.html