



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

INSPIRED BY THE RAW BEAUTY OF URBAN SPACES, DALLAS ARTIST JOEY BROCK CREATES ABSTRACT WORKS FEATURING MINIMALIST ELEMENTS THAT REFLECT HIS SURROUNDING LANDSCAPE.

WRITTEN BY LAURA MORGAN / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TERRI GLANGER



Abstract Expressionist Joey Brock (left) stands in his Dallas studio amid a few of his current works, which are inspired by the graffiti found on the warehouses of West Dallas (opposite, top). Brock uses an old medical equipment cart (opposite, bottom) to house paint brushes; spray-painted on a wall in his studio is a line taken from the poem he wrote for his latest show, "Just Below the Surface," (bottom).



As the saying goes, "You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy." But Dallas Abstract Expressionist Joey Brock may be the exception that proves the rule. His early life was spent on a 75-acre cattle farm in nearby Hamilton, but the challenging mixed-media pieces that comprised his most recent solo show, "Just Below the Surface" (at Craighead Green Gallery), owe their inspiration to far less pastoral landscapes—namely the graffiti walls and industrial warehouses of West Dallas. "I was always the quirky, creative one in my family," admits Brock with a laugh. "I never really fit into the country lifestyle."

Utilizing photography, acrylic paint, graphite, paper, pencil and ink, Brock's expressive works come to life in the form of multilayered pieces painted on Mylar. A closer look reveals abstracted images of his original-source material (the buildings and landscapes that he photographs and manipulates digitally) along with elements of Japanese minimalism. "The walls and the graffiti are raw and beautiful," says Brock, who also works on canvas, clayboard and paper. "I'm intrigued by the vibrant color

juxtaposed with the old buildings." Despite its urban genesis, the self-taught artist's latest body of work is ethereal, ghost-like and mysterious, which seems especially fitting for his theme of modern alienation. "That was the catalyst for my recent show: being seen but not heard," Brock says. And rather than rely on a traditional artist's statement to frame his latest works, Brock decided to lead with a poem that challenged the viewer to engage with his work on an emotional level. "I didn't want to be really technical about the process," he says. "My goal was to create a visual dialogue with the viewer."

Though Brock delves into important issues (a past show grappled with the Gulf oil crisis), he doesn't believe that one must suffer to create great art. "I do much better if I'm in a positive place," he says. Currently, the artist is working on a solo exhibition at Desert Art Collection in Palm Desert, California, opening this December, and a nonprofit exhibition at the Louise Hopkins Underwood Center for the Arts in Lubbock, opening August 2016; he was also recently selected for the 29th volume of Studio Visit—a series of juried artist books. "Art is such an outlet of self-expression for me," Brock says. "It's when I'm in my studio that I find the most peace." ■

