

David Simmons

Professor Tracey Salaway

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ESSAY - Greg "Craola" Simkins

Greg Simkins was born in Torrance, California slightly south of Los Angeles. His artistic ambitions bloomed as early as age three with drawings inspired by cartoons and books. Some of these works, such as *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis, *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster, and *Watership Down* by Richard Adams, still find reference in his art. He grew up with a variety of animals including a number of rabbits, which often appear in his paintings to this day.

Simkins earned his B.A. in Studio Art from California State University, Long Beach in 1999. After graduating, Simkins went to work as an illustrator for a number of clothing firms before moving on to the video game industry where he worked on games for Treyarch/Activision such as *Tony Hawk 2X*, *Spiderman 2*, and *Ultimate Spiderman*. With blessings from his former bosses at Activision, he made the leap to full time artist in 2005.

At the age of 18, Simkins began doing graffiti under the name "CRAOLA". Graffiti drove his inspiration to create and gave him the confidence and experience to paint large scale works. It also taught him color theory and perspective while further developing his artistic skills as later demonstrated in his masterful work with acrylics.

Out of his love for the animal world he seeks to bring together unlikely camaraderies and

conflicts from the landscape of his mind to the confines of canvas, paper, and walls. It is common to see deer with killer whales, puppies with crustacean pals, and birds sharing the air with rodents in his playfully ominous to ominously playful acrylic compositions informed by smooth, graffiti gradients and superbly balanced layouts that draw the eye deftly through complex story lines and rich little vignettes.

By stroke of luck, I admired his Vermeerisque quality of details and accuracies in his artworks. Then I chose to write an essay on this artist. When I first entered his website, I was so thrilled to see his graffiti work amongst his gallery. Thus gave me bigger reason to research and write about him; since he has graffiti background. All the more reason for me to link him to this Banksy project website.



Citations

Pricco, Evan. *Juxtapoz Dark Arts*. Berkeley, CA: Ginko Press, 2009. Print.

IAmScared. *Greg "Craola" Simkins*. 2013. Web. March 11, 2013

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