

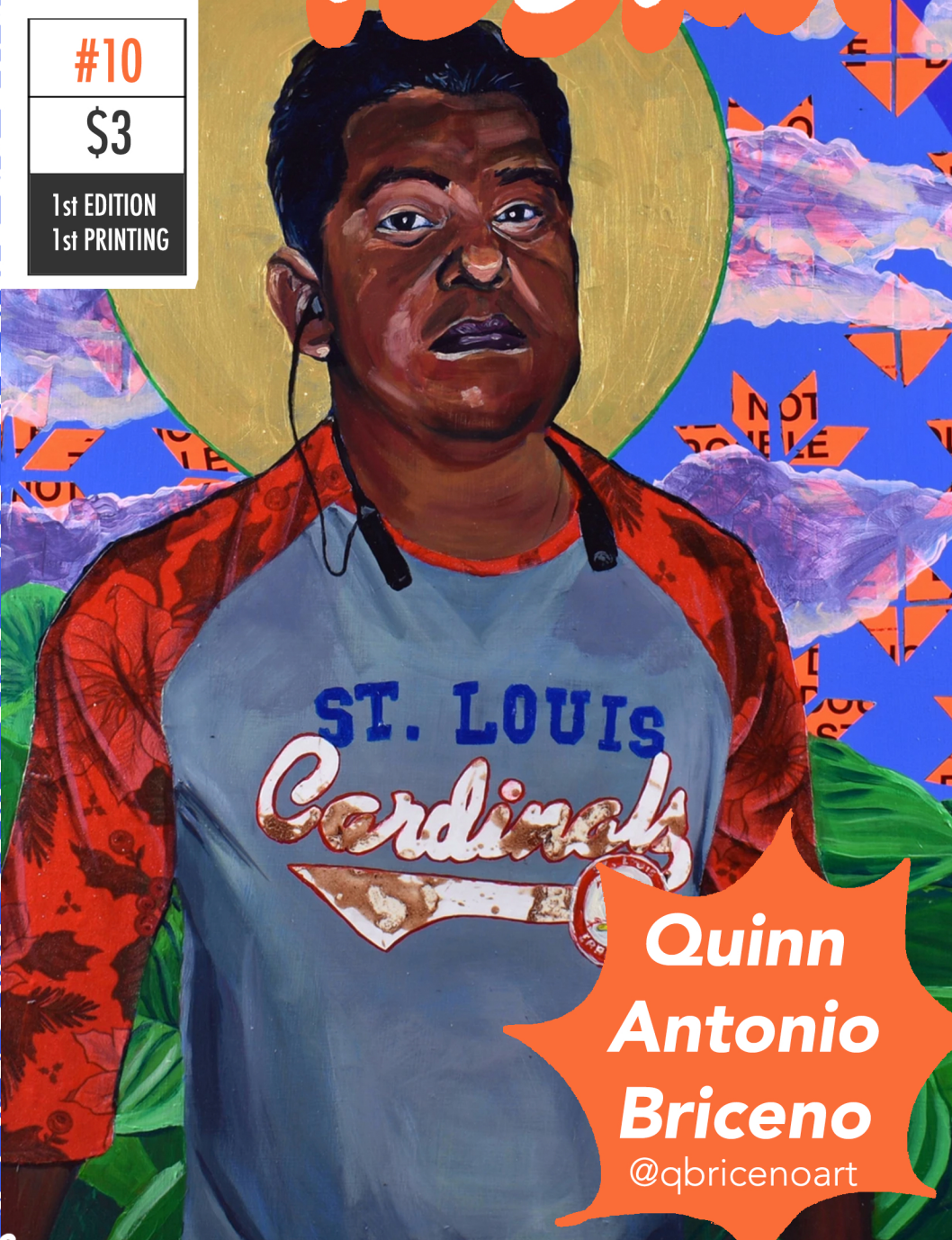


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Interview with Artist
Quinn Briceno
@qbricenoart

Topic: Family Support

Phil - When did you get into art?

Quinn - Oh, I've always been into art. My grandma was actually an artist. She went to Pratt right before WW2 started and she ended up doing drawings for Sherman tanks. Because back then they didn't have written descriptions of how to put them together because some people didn't know how to read. So her job was basically making Ikea type instructions for Sherman tanks. So I used to go to the St. Louis Art Museum with my grandma and draw. In grade school I would draw little comic books. I always knew I wanted to be an artist. It was the only thing I wanted to do. I went to a Catholic boys school for high school and I specifically chose it because I liked the art program. Then after that I went to a community college that had a really good program.

Phil - So it seems like you were supported in your exploration?

Quinn - Yah, I've been really lucky. I know some people aren't. So my mom was a journalist before she became a Spanish teacher. My grandpa was in advertising, so he had a grasp of the arts. And my dad was just like 'Do whatever makes you happy. Just make sure you really work at it.'





Topic: Scholarships Negotiation

Quinn - A big thing that most people don't know is you can negotiate with schools to get a better scholarship.

Phil - Whaaaaa? How's that?

Quinn - So you apply to multiple schools. And if you get multiple scholarships you can basically tell them 'Thank you. That's great. But this other school gave me more money. Would you be able to give me more?' You're basically playing schools against each other. And for here (Washington University in St. Louis) I told them probably 2 or 3 times that 'I'm not going' until it was last minute and they asked 'what would it take for you to come here' and I told them, they said 'we can't do that but we can do this' and I talked to my fiance and was doable.

Topic: Life after Art College

Quinn - When I graduated with my Bachelors (from the San Francisco Art Institute) I really didn't know what I was going to do. I think a big thing that most schools, especially art schools don't do, is teach people how to do things outside of school. There's not business classes.

Phil - I heard it was getting better compared to what it used to. No?

Quinn - I remember freaking out my Senior year saying 'what am I going to do?' I was working part time for the admissions/academic affairs office and I mentioned to the Assistant Dean about not knowing what we could do after graduation. He put together a series of workshops with Alumni that worked in the arts but most of the people interviewed said 'We didn't know what we were doing.' One person said 'We tried opening a gallery and after 10 years it kinda worked out.' And I was like, 'None of that sounds good.' So after graduation I moved back to Baltimore and applied for a job at Michaels.

I just figured I need a job to help pay the loans. But they asked if I wanted to be a framer, so I learned framing, which has been super helpful. I was there for a year and then started at my current job.

Phil - It's a useful skill.

Quinn - A super useful skill. I learned a lot of things. It's something that I could move anywhere in the world and do it. And they didn't really say that in school, 'framing is a possibility' so that's kinda where I'm at right now. I know there's like a huge percentage of artists that get their bachelors and masters that just stop making work after that. I think it's a big percentage. I would like to teach if possible. I would really like to just be able to sell my work and make a living, I think everybody does, but I don't know, I'm kinda just going at it. I just knew this was what I was going to do and I'd figure it out somehow.



Topic: Style Development

Quinn - My style was definitely intentional. When I came back to St. Louis after I graduated I didn't really know what to do. I didn't know the direction that I wanted to go in with work or my practice.

So I was messing with some of the photos I took back in Nicaragua in photoshop. And I never really liked painting the backgrounds. I felt like it didn't help focus on the figure enough. And I was thinking about things that would connect further to my heritage and to this idea of nostalgia. Then I remembered the tiles. They are everywhere in Latin America, they are everywhere in Nicaragua. So I started playing with it and it's been something I've been playing with ever since.



Topic: Focus on Heritage

Phil - Can you talk a little bit about focusing on your heritage in your work.

Quinn - Being mixed can be rather difficult growing up because you're wanting to fit in. You don't want to be different. Spanish was my first language but after coming back from Nicaragua I kinda stopped speaking it and lost most of it. So I wanted to get back to my roots and reconnect to this heritage that I kinda lost.

My dad was going back and forth to Nicaragua so he wasn't here all the time. I didn't have him around and there's not a lot of Spanish speakers in St. Louis, and there REALLY aren't in our neighborhood. So it's just like me, my sister, and my mom. And it's kind of difficult for a mother to do all the parenting and keep everyone speaking spanish. My grandparents didn't speak Spanish so I just lost it over time.

It's hard because I'm kind of looked down on by both cultures. You have American culture that says 'don't speak Spanish' and in Latin culture, it's the language and I've lost it. It's a weird place to be. So this is why I make my work, to try to reconnect with that.

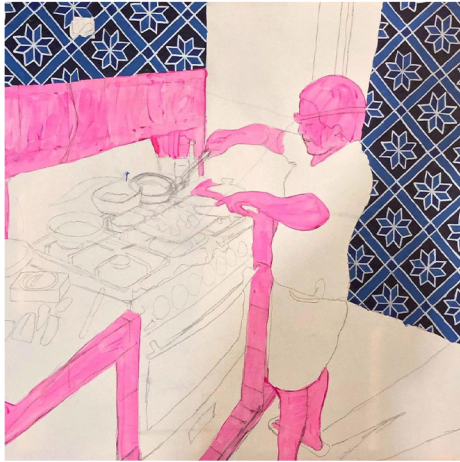




A friend in Philly said “If you’re continuously making work, at some point someone will see it. So if you keep at it, good things will happen.” I don’t know if it’s necessarily true but I like to keep that mindset.

- Quinn Briceno

Topic: Method of Working



Quinn - So I do most of my sketching in Photoshop, I have this archive of imagery that I work with, and from there I play with color and everything else. I don't usually play with color on the canvas but I've started doing that recently. Like, I'll grab my iPad, take a picture of it, put it into Procreate and start messing with it to see where it might go. That's a recent thing for me but I usually don't try to mess with it too much unless I know for a fact something isn't working.

Phil - It sounds somewhat similar to the way that I work. Do you feel like more of the creativity is on the front end with the planning and experimenting and then when you actually start painting, it's about bringing that thing to life.

Quinn - Yah, Yah, it's just very planned out for me. Which is nice because I can tell 'Okay I'll get this stuff done in 3 hours, I know what the pattern is going to look like, I know the colors.'

Phil - Systematizing the work. Yah, cool. Do you ever have like a couple hours where you don't feel like painting but when you don't feel like painting you do X.

Quinn - Yeah, I'll usually do patterns at that point because it's very systematic and mundane. So it might hurt my hand a little bit because it's very intense and very detailed. But it's like 3 or 4 colors and I don't have to mix anything crazy. And if I don't feel like painting at all I'll do the collage parts. It's a matter of knowing my time, how long something might take, and what I'm in the mood for.

Topic: Trouble with Commission

Quinn - I had a recent commission with a big tech company and it was such a pain in the butt. It was for Spanish Heritage Month and I was supposed to make this big graphic for them. But they didn't really know what they wanted and they didn't really understand what Hispanic meant. Like they didn't think my patterns were Hispanic enough.

Phil - That's... wow.

Quinn - Yeah. So Spanish Heritage Month started on the 15th and I was supposed to have it done before then so they could put it up. And they kept asking for revision after revision after revision and we missed the deadline.

After a while they said 'We still want it, can you work with us?' So I asked for more money and said it would be the last revision and if they didn't like it they'd have to figure something else out because I'm not doing another one. And it still didn't work out.

I've found the commissions where the client wants a very specific thing and wants me to make it the way that they want it, it's less likely to work out.



Topic: Keeping the flow

Quinn - I feel like I've been lucky recently. My work is starting to get out there, I'm getting shows, the work is selling a little bit which is kinda nice. There's the pressure of continuously making work even though it can be slow to make work sometimes. Or you can get stuck.

Phil - Have you ever had that?

Quinn - Yeah I've been stuck sometimes. Sometimes I'll just leave a painting alone and I'll get to it later. It's tough sometimes. (haha) I've noticed that if I take too long of a break, like more than a few weeks from making work, I'm more prone to getting artist block. I've had the issue of when I come back it's difficult to start again. It's tough. But I also had a professor last semester that said 'There's no such thing as artist block. Artist block is when you are not interested in what you are making and so you don't want to make it.' And that's kind of true sometimes, which is really annoying, so he said 'Make something else that you are interested in.' So I've found that making collage work helps. And so it comes back to the idea that sometimes you have to make bad work in order to keep going.

Phil - It's cool that you have both intricate work and work that can flow quickly. So depending on what mood you're in, you have it.

Quinn - Yah, some of my best paintings I've done in like two weeks. Like really quick. But sometimes it will take months. And sometimes I don't like those paintings as much.

(mutual laughter)

So it's a matter of getting to that sweet spot. And I find that when I do those 2 week paintings I really like, it's when I'm consistently working. Getting in the flow. I also find I get kind of sad when I'm not making. I'm a maker. And I need that in my life.





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