

JOHN SEBELIUS

ART & DESIGN

I grew up in Topeka, Kansas in a home filled with love and support. Ours was an active political household that celebrated diverse communities and people. This type of upbringing has helped me to be open to humankind and has led me to investigate individuals from unconventional communities. Exploring my own identity and voice within these diverse societies has become an essential part of my artistic practice and process. I visually explore lived experience amongst culturally rich communities, without judgment or expectations.

My most recent series “100 Questions About Sturgis” led me to the investigation of one of America’s iconic communities, the American Biker. I recently returned from the 71st Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in South Dakota, which had an attendance of 600,000 riders. In an effort to immerse myself in the biker culture, I camped out for seven days at the rally. The constant rumble of motorcycles has faded from my ears but remain in my mind unsettlingly. After this experience I was left with a mind full of imagery but an intellect filled with questions. My most recent work investigates my connection and exploration of this masculine culture and the individuals I lived amongst. Growing up in a family that defied traditional gender roles, I am intrigued in examining ways in which gender is perceived and celebrated within this community.

The direction of my current work is an ever-evolving practice. There is great physicality to my paintings that are only created through a constant reworking process. Continually building up layers of ground and physically removing them allows me the ability to connect with my subjects and materials on a physical and personal level. By scraping oil paint and embedding it with drawing, I hope to create a descriptive surface that can hold disparate images within a unified field. My works combine traditional and alternative materials with a colorfully impactful palette. My most recent work has introduced color that is used to create a dingy and worn patina over which I incise imagery pertinent to my subject's interests and lives. Memories and dreams surrounding certain individuals and images continue to serve as inspiration for the paintings. It is in the interplay between exploration and expression, drawing and painting, landscape and the figure, that I hope to locate myself as a visual artist, educator, and humanitarian.