

## Abstracity in the Age of Technology: Darren Thompson Jr.'s Road to Abstract Photography



In our modernizing, digitalized world, artists have continued to broaden their creative horizons into the medium of the Internet and smart devices. Digital art is becoming an increasingly prominent form of artistic expression. Specifically, through capturing spontaneous moments of vibrant imagery and creating colorful designs that play with lighting and aesthetics, artist Darren Thompson Jr. highlights the battle between image and color in a digital space.

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, Thompson Jr. was surrounded by artistic inspiration. His father and uncles held the gift of creative talents-- thus, his family life played a significant role in his future development as an artist. As a young child, he would use anything remotely artistic around him to create original pieces:

“I used to draw Pokemon a lot and even made them out of masking tape and colored them with crayons or magic markers,” Thompson Jr. reminisced. “I made story books as well, using cardboard as the back and front covers.” Always one to be resourceful, he found ways to

immerse himself in art even when there wasn't much for him to work with.

After a period of creative stagnance throughout his middle and high school years, Thompson Jr. regained his motivation in college, as he found that observing and seeing other pieces of art reinvigorated his passion once again. Not yet exposed to the art of abstract photography, his main focus started off with flower photography and digital paintings until he came across an abstract photography piece at an art collective he participated in.

There's definitely a beauty with looking at a photo yet being unable to really connect it to a tangible object-- it leaves so much room for viewer interpretation and for audiences to use their own memories and perspectives to create an image that is personable to them:

“There is no right or wrong answer,” Thompson Jr. stated. “I can't count how many times multiple people saw different things in my abstract works and even pointed out some things to me I didn't notice.” With abstract photography, there is a clear two-way relationship between viewer and photographer-- since there is so much liberation with what to see, artists often become aware of the different angles their piece was able to capture.

Especially with younger generations, so much of their lives are centered around technology. A lot of negativity courses through the Internet and social media-- it's evermore



important to continue encouraging creative expression and positive energy. Digital art is applicable to anyone who uses technology in their everyday lives-- it's intertwining advanced digital features and the simple joy of creating art. While it may appear that there is an underlying, complex meaning behind each piece,

"I normally don't have a game plan when it comes to my art," Thompson Jr. mentioned. "I just take a bunch of random photos of things people wouldn't even pay attention to and see what I can come up with."

Digital art has the ability to enhance everyday items and sights-- the quality of the photos and the enhancements from Photoshop can generate a completely new image of something we all know well. For example, Thompson Jr. was able to transform a picture of the sky and ocean (shown right) into a vivacious, cosmic masterpiece with neon colors and hazy lights. He has also edited and



enhanced images of hand sanitizers, clouds, ice, and other common sights that we perhaps don't think much of.

It's interesting to think of Photoshop as an art form. There are so many new ways to combine images and lay them on top of each other, edit individual photos, and bring out unseen details. Even with just the photo settings on an iPhone, Thompson Jr. has added distinct features to his photography; simple edits paired with Photoshop often make way for brilliant abstract art.

Thompson Jr. aims to catch eyes through his bold, bright pieces. Works like "Color Zone" (shown left) and series such as his Zodiac EVO collection reflect the extent to which his digital style can reach. Locally, in the bustling culture of Washington D.C., Thompson Jr. has been able to test out his talents surrounded by countless galleries, museums, and exhibitions. His D.C.-inspired digital paintings revolve

around the city's professional sports teams,

"The pieces of the D.C. sports teams are a part of my Top X series," Thompson Jr. explained, "a series which features the jerseys of the top 10 players (in my opinion) for those franchises." His digital work includes dedications to the Washington Football Team, the Washington Wizards (shown right), and, in the future, the Washington Nationals. His sports-based pieces all have exuberant, fun backgrounds and include the team's greatest achievements. Art appreciates every single sport-- each painting creates a unique aura around the individual teams.



On digital platforms, colorful art can be made out of the tiniest, most simple of subjects. As Thompson Jr. observed,

“We are in an advancing digital age, where social media, the Internet, and technology are taking front stage.” Artistic mediums are reaching new heights in terms of altering lighting, colors, details, and more.

Testing the artistic possibilities of technology, the digital artist is continuing to experiment with different subjects and methods. He plans on “pushing the boundaries of [his] abstract photography” and inspiring the youth to start creating and find joy while doing so.

“Your art will continue to grow and improve the more you work at it,” he said. “But most importantly, have fun creating.”