



intellectual properties

"The future depends entirely on what each of us does every day; a movement is only people moving."

.dots.

March 27th, 2006

on friday night, we went to the Space Gallery to see an exhibit celebrating the art of William Noguera, who has been in San Quentin on death row for 17 years. in that time he has become a highly-skilled pointillist, an art that takes great patience, and, in my opinion, insight into and compassion for the human condition.

when we walked out of the rain into the gallery, mr. noguera was speaking live, via speakerphone. there was a reproduction of his 4x8' cell: art on cement walls, lights on, books opened, clothing hanging on the wall. his art is done almost solely in black ink, so all of the works are black and white, and we were encouraged to also dress in b&w in honor of the artist. how strange, i thought, as i looked around at the crowd, mostly upper-middle class art connoisseurs, wearing standard black-bourgeois apparel, some even wearing berets, that this man has no idea who he is speaking to. he is there, trapped behind bars, and we are here, sipping wine and staring at years of his only means of personal expression from that small cell. it felt very disconnected, but his voice over the phone was articulate, even warm, and excited.

i was staring at an incredibly photographic piece – so many thousands of dots, arranged just so – when i was approached by a man with a video camera and asked if i knew anything about art. i said sure. i know about art.

what do you like about this form of art ([pointillism/stippling](#))?

i find pointillism to be one of the most passionate forms of art. the time and attention it takes to create a world out of thousands of tiny dots, to examine the subject's every curve, every shadow, every hint of life and place each particularly shaded dot so discreetly is a true art. somehow, the method also brings an incredible amount of life and movement to the works. i'm surprised by the amount of life in his images. william noguera's work is incredibly precise, not at all impressionist like Seurat, and genuinely photographic in detail, which is quite impressive.

in what way do you think this exhibit could inspire others?

it is obviously an incredible testament to the ability of art to provide both escape and release for the artist – the title of the exhibition as Escape Artist says it all. this man has been confined to imprisonment for more than 20 years, and in his own words has stated that his art has saved his soul. while other men wither and die staring at cement walls, his imagination travels the world and the pen in his hand recreates it for him, moment by moment, pixel by pixel, shape by shape. and not only is he an inspiration for artists or those seeking a voice, an instrument of expression, but it is important for each of us to recognize that no matter how confined we may be, how many obstacles may appear, if there is a will there is a way to not only improve upon your situation but make your voice heard and make it matter. it is also inspiring to see that a man condemned can find redemption, and he is a shining example of the reasons way our prison system is so incredibly flawed, keeping changed men behind bars. with the recent state-inflicted death of Tookie Williams, i think William Noguera's art is incredibly important at this time.

that was a good answer

the interviewer moved on, and i went back to staring at the dots.