



The Cathedrals of Rex

by Ciera Bowlby "The Cathedrals of Lacoste" (Fall 2015, Lacoste France.)

There are few pieces in an artist's life that have the ability to impact and influence an entire community. There are even fewer times when the artist has the ability to impact an entire village in the Provencal Valley of the Luberon in southeastern France, and make them a part of the work itself.

However, Rex Hausmann, a graduate painting student at the Savannah College of Art and Design bridged the gap between American student and villager. His piece, *The Cathedrals of Lacoste*, incorporates not only the present impact that the village of Lacoste has had on him, but is also representative of the lasting impression he hopes to have on the village.

"I just wanted to react to this place. I just wanted to honor the people who have worked so hard," said Rex, describing his driving force behind his painting turned processional. The project started out simply as a personal rendering of the *Sagrada Familia*, since cathedral paintings are something that Rex is more familiar with than most. After thirteen years, and one hundred and fifty plus structure paintings & drawings of the *Duomo* in Florence, he decided to once again set his focus on the cathedrals of Europe.

"Historically, they're the identity of the city, and the center of the city, and it presents this conundrum of sacred and space," Rex explains. As he began to plan his early drawings of the *Sagrada Familia*, he began to notice the very emptiness that he used to describe some cathedrals. Something was missing from his sketches.

It wasn't until a Sunday morning spent in an empty church pew that Rex realized what it was that his piece needed, People. After saying a small prayer, and walking up the hill, he ran into sculptor and village native, Evert Lindfors, sitting on the walk wall outside of an old bakery that SCAD renovated into a library for its students.

"You have it," said Evert to Rex in his ethereal voice. "I believe you, your drawings...You're an artist." He nodded his head and looked directly at Rex.

"Art comes from three places," he continued. "It goes from the head to the heart, and from the heart to the hands. If it doesn't come from all three, it should be left alone. But in your drawings, I see all three connect."

The two artists looked around at the audience of students peaking out of nearby studio and library windows listening in on their conversation. It was in this moment that Rex understood what his true piece would be.

"My painting was too much in my head," recounted Rex. "I needed to find where my heart was, and it's with all of the wonderful people here."

His idea was to create what he called a "representation of Lacoste in time." This painting would change with Lacoste and his experiences as they happened in real time, truly capturing actuality of life in this village during the fall quarter of 2015. His project was becoming something bigger than he could control or imagine, much to Rex's excitement. He embraced this metamodernist ideal that the event his work created was starting to become more important than the actual work itself.

But he needed a new platform for the piece, for it had gotten too big for the original canvas that Rex had originally envisioned. His idea to put the painting on a traditional Provençal processional stretcher frame came to him while visiting the Louvre in Paris. He pulled out his phone and displayed a picture of a double sided painting jutting out from the wall, a Marco Marziale painting "Portrait d'homme ; au revers Paysage allegorique" (1493-1507).

"That's enough of an excuse for me," he said with a laugh. "If it's hanging in the Louvre like that, I can make a painting in the real world."

As his ideas grew and began to take on a new form, so did his project, moving from humble painting to processional. The idea of the processional came to Rex by way of Monsieur Jean-Pierre Soalhat, architecture preservationist, and art historian of the region. Jean-Pierre constructed the mobile stretcher frame for the processional based on the ones he recalled watching in his childhood.

From there, the idea of the processional took its final shape. It would start at the lavoir, a large stone wash basin located at the bottom of the hill where women would wash the laundry. The painting and the people carrying the painting, or holding on to the processional with streamers would then proceed up the ancient cobblestone street to Evert and his studio, honoring both him, and the lifetime that he has spent creating in this village.

"I wanted to show Evert his impact on me, and what I've created from that impact. What better way to do it than showing up with the entire student body?" Rex said chuckling.

For him, the processional is more than an event taking place on November 8th, 2015. It's about the lasting effect that he as an artist, student, and person will have on those who are permanently here.

He even plans to have everyone in the village involved in the project by capturing their hand prints on the back of the painting in red ochre, a rich pigment from the neighboring town of Rousillion.

Rex attributes his inspiration for the of this project to Daniel Buren, Yves Klein, and Tom Sachs, artists who continue to impact painter he has become.

"Those are some of the people I really think about. I don't think of painting as a static object. Painting is like film," Rex said, straightening his posture. "And in film, you need a lot of people to make it work." Just like the myriad of people now making this dream a reality.

One of the many people who are heavily involved in this process is Bruno Pitot, a Lacoste native and local chef. His Provençal roots run deeply intertwined with this place, making him the perfect person in Rex's heart, and in the hearts of the villagers, to bless the painting with water at the lavoir on the day of the ceremony.

The idea of prominent townsfolk blessing important objects is as old as the valley itself. It is with these traditions transitioning into a modern context that will be the binding agent between the communities of Lacoste, both past and present, student and local.

On the day of the processional, all those who live in the village will taste a special jam made by none other than Bruno Pitot. This is Rex's way of bringing a little bit of his home state of Texas to the deeply rooted customs of this region, and bringing everyone together as one in a show of strength and warm fellow ship that is so easily felt while walking through Lacoste. If there is one thing they all can take from this experience, it's that it truly does take a village to make a lush valley feel like home.

