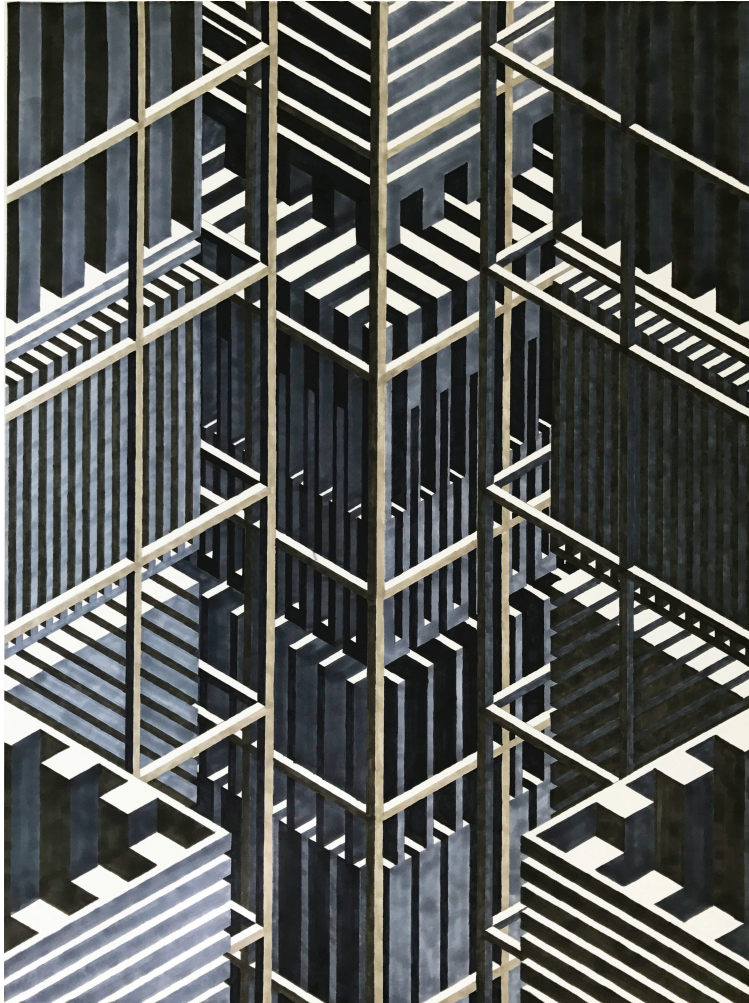




PennState
College of Arts and Architecture



Artist Q & A: Nick Naber

July 27, 2017

Nick Naber is a graduate in painting and drawing from Pratt Institute (2012) & University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee (2010). He has had two solo exhibitions at OPUS Projects in Chelsea after earning his graduate degree along with group exhibitions at multiple venues. Nick has been interviewed multiple times about his practice most recently for Studio Break Podcast (2015) and his work has been published in Alt/Process (2015), GRAPHITE Journal (2012). Nick is also the Co- Founder/East Coast Editor and Contributor at The Coastal Post.

Nick Naber, "Untitled (pernicious)," 2017.

Marker and graphite on watercolor paper, 29.5 x 22 in.

How has living in New York influenced your work?

This is a big question. New York has influenced my work in numerous ways. I think the biggest being the visual landscape of this manmade place. New York City is not a beautiful city, it's a utilitarian city with some stunning buildings peppered in. I'm not interested in the beautiful buildings; I'm more concerned

with the odd, brutal, cheap, and strange buildings. My work draws heavily from them. I draw them in my sketchbook and abstract them on my finished works. New York is also where I attended Grad School. It's a place where I feel like I concentrated more on my practice while also reading and learning more about the things that interest me and have a great effect on my work.

Your artist statement says that your work “draws on the visual language of penitentiaries” – what interests you about these structures in particular?

Penitentiaries are the visual manifestation of society's power over people. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* is a book that I have read and reread. It gives a great history of humanities power over the individual in our society. Penitentiaries, prisons, super max facilities, schools, government buildings, and a whole host of other architectural types control people. Most of us are unaware of the deep impact that space has on us. In many ways this book, and places like Alcatraz, or Eastern State Penitentiary are part of the work. I see the towering structures in my drawings as the power source or the observing eye, and the lower spaces as places to contain and control in these dystopic cityscapes.

You work mainly on paper using a combination of watercolor and graphite – Can you tell us a little about your process?

Recently, I have been working almost exclusively with graphite and watercolor. My work looks hyper planned but it's not planned at all. I start with a few thumbnail sketches in my sketchbook and write some notes about previous works and what I want to try and figure out or do in a new drawing. Once that part of ideation is done, I begin to draw. I use a drafting table, architectural scale (all work is to scale), and a triangle. I start plotting out different elements and draw I let them happen naturally. I never have old works on my walls in the studio, I don't want them to influence color choices or to redraw certain elements over and over. After the drawing part is done I begin to watercolor.

What determines whether you use color or not, particularly in your Untitled (series)?

The color comes from a lot of sources. I'm constantly drawn to purple and yellow. Yellow is a color known to make people go crazy after a long period of time. They used to paint psych wards, mental institutions, and prisons yellow as a happy color, but it couldn't be further from that. I like that weird bit of color history, and I use it in my watercolors. I want to play up contrasts and work with compliments and triads to do something sort of color theory with the watercolors. This is technical and I don't know that most viewers who aren't painters would get that by looking at the work. It's something that I do, because I think it is engaging and visually helps the work. I also do many works that are monochromatic. Monochromes are something that I have done for years, I love to make two colors appear as three or four even it's an old Albers trick and one of my favorites.

Do you plan on continuing making works inspired by cityscapes? What's next for you?

I have been invested in this work since 2015, it's the longest series of drawings I have ever done. I think I will be continuing these works for a while. I still find them challenging to make, and I am still invested in the problem that they cause visually and the deeper meaning that they hold. My intention is to make

these room sized. Currently, I work out of my apartment and I max out at 26 x 40 inches. I want the scale of this work to be relative to human scale, I want them to envelop you, and to make it uncomfortable to look at because you cannot escape this dystopic place.

For more information visit Nick Naber's website at <http://nicknaber.com> and follow him on Instagram at @nicknaber