

US+U is pleased to announce *Mode of Survival*, a solo exhibition of work by artist in residence Mike McManus, opening Saturday May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

When discussing the culmination of this body work McManus said he felt deeply connected to a statement - "I became an artist --to find a mode of survival", made by sculptor extraordinaire Louise Bourgeois.

He explained how making art became an integral part of his personal journey through both struggle and triumph, ultimately becoming a guide for both.

"After nearly a decade of sobriety I relapsed into a dangerous cycle of drugs and alcohol shortly after being awarded the Urban Studio Unbound residency. Staying relentlessly committed to the studio through the darkness of addiction, and mental illness, I laid bare my spirit through intuitive mark making; furiously grinding chalk to dust and melting into the smooth flow of the oil stick. My creations became odes to my city's rugged weather-beaten surfaces. Commemorative drawings of resilient weeds thriving through brick and asphalt. It's here I find a special type of beauty: layers exposed, cracks and rust revealing an enduring life. This residency offered me a refuge of creation and was truly God's saving grace.

Instead of drinking myself to death I found a therapeutic healing in orchestrating marker and paint through a graffiti-esque style that was bodily conditioned in me since childhood; satisfying a desperate groaning within. As I worked out my wounds and inadequacies in the studio through drawing and painting. I also began to grid, cut and sew, simple geometric shapes. The processes precision became a beneficial practice for calming and ordering mental deficiencies.

Quilting to me was a way to literally wrap myself in this art making which has been a healing vehicle for me, and to offer this to others. This same mantra drove my sculptural metal work into design. Aiming for the power of transformation and spiritual growth imbued in my vessels, to be experienced in everyday life. These plasma-cut, welded, brazed and enameled objects aesthetically bearing an urban decay rawness similar to my paintings.

As I healed and sought help from God and people I managed to work my way back to sobriety. My art making is now a vital support in my progress of recovery.

As in the past, drawing flowers and plants, began to sprout through my practice again as I yearned for hopefulness and joy.

I'm grateful for the gift of art making and to Urban Studio Unbound for the space to practice my God given Mode of Survival."

The physicality of making art brought him to a therapeutic place of releasing, a healing space to unload the built-up anxieties and wounds of life. McManus felt that philosophy solidified his "why" of making art, it's what allows him function in life.

The exhibition features work ranging from paintings, works on paper, textiles, and welded vessels. "The sculptural vessels were more of a meditative prayer, meticulous type of craft/design work. I had also been studying and following textile work for a long time and worked on a clothing line where I learned to sew and when I found interesting studio rags / drop cloths in my environment I began to create simple patterns with them. Using materials in my immediate environment became an integral part of my practice."

US+U curator and co-director Melissa Starke adds- "Mike delved in and dug deep. His studio looked lived in, in the best way. He'd have in progress paintings on the wall and a sewing machine on his desk. There were times the floor was almost completely covered with art and art supplies. He went through various moments of life during his time with us and the result is work that is raw and moving, sometimes speaking loudly and sometimes, a sweet whisper. He has these strong rugged paintings that then

meet thoughtfully drawn flowers. It's a beautiful representation, a perfectly layered romance of the human condition and all its complexities. When I look at his work, I see vulnerability and openness and at the same time his wickedly radiant energy shines through. He's an incredibly special person and what he brought to the gallery and his work is impactful “

The exhibition will open at 11am for general viewing to coincide with the citywide Yonkers Arts Weekend festival, with a reception 3-6pm. The exhibition is hosted in partnership with Yonkers Arts at 530 Nepperhan Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> floor in the Carpet Mills Art District and will be on view through Friday May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Additional programming includes a *Spiritual Drawing Workshop* led by the artist, free + open to public via a RSVP, date to be announced.