



Disassociation

Max Markwald

In September 2018, I legally changed my name to Max Markwald (he/him/his) and began the series “Disassociation.” I painted myself once a month for a year as a way of documenting my gender transition. Instead of showing a fluid progression, each painting became an obscured portrait—hiding in full view.

After my senior show, I began thinking about what it meant to be a female artist as I had been told to do, but the label didn’t feel right. I couldn’t recognize myself in the mirror or in pictures. Without words to describe the displacement I felt in my body, I painted a series of androgynous self-portraits. At my gallery opening, I felt unqualified to be making work about

gender. I looked around and couldn't recognize myself in the paintings either. I began painting my friends dressed as Rosie the Riveter, which became a way to explore and subvert gender roles. I then began painting masculinity: an old photograph of myself at fourteen where I looked tomboyish; the house I grew up in that had no drywall, just rafters and fiberglass insulation; ridiculously gendered products like deodorant and body spray.

In April 2018, I was one of six artists to be featured in the Canvas Magazine article "Who's Next: Emerging Artists in Northeast Ohio." It was very exciting, but it was also the push I needed to come out and be myself—Max Markwald, just an average-joe painter.