

Art in motion

Mechanical device creates movement-based drawings

By Taylor Crone
AdVantage

One probably doesn't think about the movements involved in even our most basic everyday activities, such as walking or driving.

Rodrick Whetstone does.

Whetstone, who earned his master of arts and master of fine arts in design at the University of Iowa and now teaches at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, has created a wearable device that makes art out of everyday life.

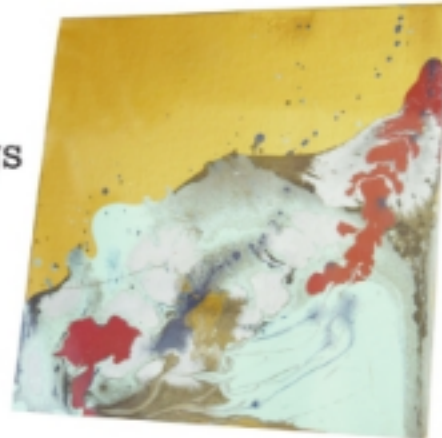
► Rodrick Whetstone with his device (photos by Taylor Crone)

"I wear it on the front of me," he said of the device, which he crafted out of spare parts. "There is a clip that hooks into my belt loop. There is also a strap that goes around my neck and

creates a level surface. Above that level surface is a metal rod with a pen hanging from it. That pen dangles like a pendulum. Every time I move, it records the movement by the pen striking the page."

The sketches the device creates are often made throughout the day or even over the course of a week. He will wear the device while walking, driving and lecturing. Some sketches have multiple pen colors, representing these different activities.

A self-described "tinkerer," Whetstone said he got the idea because he was looking at using abstract expressionism to create artwork. The device isn't just a mechanical creation, either — it also represents an aspect of Rodrick's personal life.



▲ Painting created using spray paint

► Drawing made in his sketchbook



"The machine is based on loss of control," he said. "I've lost control in some areas of my life recently. Over the years when I go through something, I put it into art work."

Whetstone has a dedicated passion for art and has been making art since an early age. His childhood provided him with artistic inspiration.

"I've been drawing and making art since I've been able to walk. Everything started there," he said. "My father is an artist. He had his paintings hanging around the living room and around the house. Seeing those every day inspired me to start."

Whetstone's art isn't just limited to his sketching device, either. He also creates with other mediums, including painting with spray paint and making sketches in a used blank book he bought.

"It was in the quarter bin at a bookstore. I took out the codex and put my own in. It's just a series of mark makings. I experiment with pens, just colors and doodles," he said. "This is what I do to relax and to think out design problems and regular problems. But it is mostly for fun."

Whetstone uses the hashtag #RDWdraw on front of his sketching device to encourage people to discuss his art on social media sites. He walks around the SIUE campus while wearing the device to generate interest.

"I'm using an analog system for drawing. Pen and paper. We are in a digital age. So, the hashtag means to take that analog system and make it more widely available to everyone," he said. "My students can see it, I have friends and family around the country that are able to see it and keep up with my work." 📷



A sketch created Whetstone's machine

Welcome to another installment of "State of the Art," a feature that focuses on local artists in a variety of mediums, including canvas, sculpture, performance art and more! Send us your leads ► fredpollard@advantagenews.com