





Looking over the digital images I took of my previous artwork, it seemed almost foreign. My intentions and motivations behind many of the pieces were simply gone. It was as though the works had created themselves. The shapes, lines, colors, negative spaces – they had all seemingly come together of their own accord to mean something, to say something. To be art.

So, I had my idea. I wanted to illustrate the notion that art can seem to make itself. I knew right away that I should use bold shapes and lines: the foundations of most of my previous works. I also knew that I wanted these to be in charcoal, because on the white canvas the marks would be really outstanding.

I started with pencil. I drew many shapes and connected them with lines. I wasn't happy with the results, so I erased and did it again. Six or seven times into this process I nearly abandoned the idea. The forms weren't coming together like I wanted. They weren't meaning or representing anything on their own.

The canvas was gray with failed attempts. I placed some triangles atop the mess and traced. I saw a face. I saw feet. I made arms. I drew lines. The shapes came together to make something lifelike. I hurriedly captured the satisfactory result with the deep black outlines of charcoal.

I armed the form with a paintbrush and a pencil with an eraser. The gray mess, though light and recessed in comparison to the charcoal, was really bothering me. I decided to cover it with a light rub of charcoal. Again and again I erased my gray marks with increasingly black ones. Until my form was not so outstanding. The bold marks were almost hidden on the now darker canvas.

It was the empty space that really stood out now. Empty were the shapes; eye-catching. I went with it – I added lines all over the canvas. Deep dark marks, overlapping in haphazard shapes. Confounding the once clear marks that made my lifelike form. Those lines were now just ordinary. Lines and shapes among many.

Originally, when I gave the drawing a pencil, I had wanted the observer to think the work drew itself. Not any more; now I wanted the onlooker to think the form had used the eraser I gave it. It had erased itself into existence.

It looked good. But the form held an unused paintbrush. Perhaps it would be interesting if the form had used the paintbrush to paint the pencil with the eraser that was used to make the form.

So I added the paint. And I called it complete.

A canvas of charcoal, a paintbrush to paint a pencil with an eraser, an eraser to make its own shape. Over a few days I had given it all the tools it needed to make itself.

In some real sense, it had – and always did.