Why I [Create resistance]

When every new trend is a desperate push into being, looking, acting, dressing, and liking the same things as everybody else, being unique in my art is the way I push against it. Nobody else can have this purse, or jacket, or shoes, because I decorated them myself. My art belongs to me, giving my unique ideas to those I choose to give them to - you cannot buy what I make off of a shelf in a department store.

When I was in middle school, I endured the mildly traumatic experience of being a kid who didn't understand social hierarchy, and didn't understand that people were afraid of or hateful towards things they didn't understand. This led to me being very forthright about my hobbies, interests, doings, music, and basically everything else, which led to me being mildly ostracised and made fun of for such things. I think that experience fueled me in spite of these experiences. I wasn't going to let anybody dim my spark or tell me to stop - which was also met with resistance for the art I liked. I had not foreseen this, somehow. But I kept going, because I lack social survival instinct, and I don't always know what's good for me.

I don't blame those kids for making fun of me - yes, I was cringy and weird. I did and still do weird things, but I wasn't hurting anybody. I blame our current social climate. Even with body positivity and queer acceptance and every other form of "everybody needs to get along", we were focusing on the wrong things. Instead of "These people are here, and normal, deal with it," those movements focused on "You have to love these people, and if you don't, you're wrong". Things couldn't be neutral, no, they had to be positive. And when it comes to being weird and a weird artist, no less, they couldn't be neutral - they've been told that they have to take a side. This impression has stayed with me for a long time.

And here I am now, nearly seven or eight years after that first experience and still making art and doing what I love. And I still get pushback for my style and my dislike of rules (or the idea of grading art, redundant by the fact that I quite literally attend an art school that grades art). My parents made me do it, and when I brought up that it would be an issue for me, they didn't believe me, saying it would be fine. I was right. I am quite often in a standoff with my teachers about their rules for grading art, and my parents are unhappy with the fact that I keep pushing it, because it affects my grades - like it isn't their fault I'm here in the first place. But I've come to accept it. After all, at the time of writing this, I'm simply trying to get through the year. I can resist in other, more creative ways.

After a whole lot of life experience, I'm still learning how to mold myself into the person I want to be. Happy, positive, reassuring, creative. I struggle with all of these things, every day. But that's part of the process. Each person at some point, consciously or not, has decided that they know who they want to be, and has begun taking steps towards being that person. For most people, they are who they are in reaction to the way that they have been treated, perceived, and reacted to over the course of their life so far. And we will all continue changing, bit by bit by bit, until the day our lights blink out in the windows of life. Change is a constant, and while it is hard, it is reassuring to know that every day is another day spent becoming the person who you are.

To some point, looking around in our world right now, there are so many negative things happening, so many that it creates a sort of paralysis. You cannot resist all 28 (million) negative things that affect you the most, all at the same time. You are flooded with too much information, so much that you cannot make sense of all of it. The art I create is always resistant in some manner. Meta social commentary, something that pushes against social norms, or frankly, an interest of mine that I don't allow other people's opinions to push me out of touch with. Or, it is resistant through joy.

When all of those negative things are pushing you down, joy is an act of resistance. Existing in a state that defies all the negative emotion that you experience in a day is radical. So doing art just for fun is resistance. Passive, to some degree, compared to going out and protesting, but it's hopeful. As Leia says in *The Last Jedi,* "Hope is like the sun. If you only believe in it when you can see it, you'll never make it through the night". The act of being hopeful inspires action in the people around you existing in joy is a positive in nearly every way.

When it comes to creating art that brings you joy, it could be nearly anything. Most recently, I decorated a leather jacket emulating and referencing my favorite movie character. It made me happy, so I did it, regardless of any idea that it might be "cringe" because it's a character from a children's movie. Art is dressing up in a nice outfit to go to the movies. When Spiderman: Into the Spiderverse came out, a few friends and I dressed up really nice and went to the theater. My dad told me it was a little too fancy for the movies. But we went out and had fun, no matter how many odd looks we got for being in suits and nice dresses. For my explorations project, my junior year, I made art about Formula 1, a sport I greatly enjoy watching and following because making art about the things I love makes me happy.

Art as joy (and therefore resistance) also takes the form of more angry art. Letting out your negative emotions onto a canvas is something many people have done, myself included. It helps you process and get rid of those negative emotions so there is more room for joy. I've begun a project many times feeling bitterness or anger or unhappiness, and when I finished the project, those feelings left me, like the ideas of the project left me.

So I will leave you with one last story about hope. As I claw my way through my senior year of high school, I spend much of my time studying and writing college application essays. But through it all, I know I must still take the time to create art that I love, because it gives me hope. That is my first and most important act of resistance. Don't let the world get you down, or you'll lose all your progress to negativity.

When people make fun of you, or the world throws a speedbump in your race, or you can't keep up with the Jones', or something on the news makes it feel like tomorrow won't happen, you have to remind yourself that you are the person who can get through it, regardless.