



Dan Grissom

Smoky Hill River Festival Print 2023

"Great Blue Heron on the river"

Biography

Dan Grissom is an illustrator, printmaker, and musician based in Austin, Texas, but originally from rural Louisiana. Childhood summer days spent exploring the forests around a nearby creek fostered a love of nature and animals that continues to find its way into his work. His primary focus is screen printing, although his background is in relief printing and painting.

Dan received a Bachelor's Degree in Graphic Design from Northwestern State University in Louisiana. While pursuing this degree, he became more excited by his studio art classes, such as painting and printmaking, than those of his chosen major. So much so, after graduating, he pursued a Master's Degree in Painting and Printmaking at Stephen F. Austin State University in East Texas.

In 2006, upon completion of graduate school, Dan moved to Austin, Texas, where he worked for several years as a Graphic Designer while making his art on the side. He began to experiment more with screen printing a few years later. His first prints were made for his band's album covers in a friend's backyard, exposing the Screen with sunlight, washing them out with a garden hose, and setting them to dry in the drawers of an old dresser they found on the street. Shortly after, he got a job printing posters in an actual print shop and learned more precise ways of doing things that allowed for more consistency in the results.

After working as a printer for a few different print shops, in 2017, Dan finished building a fully functional print studio in his garage and focused solely on his own work. In addition to his fine artwork, Dan's background in Graphic Design helped establish him in the world of screen printed concert posters, where he has created designs for a wide range of artists such as John Prine, Metallica, Salt-N-Pepa, "Weird Al" Yankovic, and many more.

His work is colorful and marked by minimal, naturalistic compositions and sometimes very intricate line work. Dan's subject matter varies but often involves nature and animals with subtle storytelling elements.

Artist Statement

Carl Sagan once said, "Every aspect of Nature reveals a deep mystery and touches our sense of wonder and awe." Much of my work is inspired by this sense of peace I experience when I allow myself to just sit still in the outdoors.

As a child, I would put a sandwich, an apple, and a canteen full of water in my backpack and go exploring up and down the nearby creek. When I got tired of walking, I'd sit down and eat my apple. I always loved sitting still by the creek long enough that the animals wouldn't really notice me and would just go on about their business doing animal things. Maybe a few squirrels would be wrestling on a tree limb, a water snake would slide down the bank into the creek, and then a deer would slowly ease out from the bushes and cautiously step to the edge of the water. I would sit and watch as long as I could. That is, unless I brought my dog along. He would rarely let these other critters invade our space without his say-so.

While researching the wildlife around Salina, Kansas, for this print, I was transported right back to those childhood summer days sitting by the creek. The landscapes and animals around Salina are pretty similar to what I grew up surrounded by in central Louisiana, so I knew I'd feel at home creating this piece. I've always loved spotting a Great Blue Heron in the wild, and when I saw that those were prominent around Salina, I knew I wanted that to be the focus. I grew up frequently seeing their paler cousin, the Egret, in Louisiana. Other details you can find in this piece are some deer, a dragonfly, some turtles on a log, and a beaver dam.

I drew this image in layers and hand-printed it as a 4-color screen print with custom mixed colors. With screen printing, each color layer is printed one at a time and allowed to dry before moving on to the next color layer. The first layer is what is usually referred to as a "split fountain." Here I mixed two colors and printed them with the same Screen, creating the gradient background of the sky and its reflection in the water. The next layer was the green for the grass and some background elements in the forest. I mixed a transparent reddish grey for the third layer, creating shadows and adding more details. I then finished it off with a dark grey-blue for the line art. I've titled this piece "Great Blue Heron on the river" because I sometimes like to keep my titles simple and descriptive. I'm quite pleased with how this turned out, and I hope it transports you to a peaceful place like creating it did for me.