

OFF KILTER

JEFFREY BOHL

Marshall, Michigan



About the Artist

I am an educator by trade -- high school math teacher, then principal, now teacher again. I have worked in rural, suburban, and urban schools with nearly every type of student and demographic. I came to teaching after stints as a tool design engineer and a fine arts student at Kendall College of Art and Design.

I am an artist and a craftsman at heart. I have an almost pathological need to make things. In making art I find a peace and satisfaction that I can't get any other way. In creating art, I strive for novelty. I have been focusing lately on images that evoke positive emotions. There is so much to worry about in today's world, and art can bring us to a different, more generative place.

Along with the creative aspect, sculpting, more than any other art form, requires craftsmanship and technical skills. I fabricate my own bronzes, including the pedestals. I am blessed with a broad range of skills, due in no small part to my father's teaching, and I enjoy using those technical skills to bring my creative ideas to life.

The greatest pleasure for any artist is when people connect with their work. If you draw any type of appreciation from my sculpture, please contact me at jvbohl@gmail.com. Even if you're not in the market for artwork, I would love to hear from you.

Anne and our three children, Maddy, Liam, and Aidan, have helped me understand the need for balance in my life, and the central part that art plays in that balance for me and our family.

About the Work

My hope is that children will love Off Kilter. This piece has a playful, happy vibe and is intended to bring a smile to the faces of viewers. The character is clearly happy, and might be looking for a friend to take on an adventure for the day.

Artist Statement

“Now you’re back where you belong.” Those are the words of my figure drawing instructor after I returned to art school after a brief hiatus. In her class I would regularly get lost in the creative process. Lost to the point where three hours pass in what feels like ten minutes. Really lost. Throughout my life—from tooling design, to teaching mathematics, to education administration—I’ve entered and participated in many entirely different communities. They are so varied, though, that I sometimes feel like I don’t really belong in any of them; except in art. Art is the one pursuit that has remained constant for me throughout my adult life. It is the one place where I feel most like I belong, and I feel most like I belong when I am entirely lost in it.

To me, being lost in art is seeing things with new eyes—looking for what is not obvious and pushing myself to create something unique. I appreciate novelty as much as any particular aesthetic. I enjoy when people say they haven’t seen anything like it before.

My ideas are born in three dimensions. I never sketch ideas for sculptures because it limits me to familiar images. I am much more creative in the round. The process I use is akin to found object sculpture—finding things and putting them together in some interesting way. The only difference is that I make my own objects rather than finding them. These objects are forms and shapes made from sculpting wax. The process begins with blocks of wax that I melt and mold into sheets, which I then heat up, cut, break, assemble, disassemble, drip wax on, scratch, and otherwise abuse. Using a torch, a soldering iron, and modeling tools, I create individual wax forms that are interesting in their own right. Then, working from the resulting “bone pile” of these odd forms, I assemble my sculptures.

The resulting pieces vary greatly because they grow from the chance meetings of these various unrelated individual forms. Much of my work makes references to the human figure, while my more recent work includes animal forms. When I sculpt, I consciously try to avoid familiar visual references. If I create a form that looks or feels too familiar, I sometimes break it, cut it apart, or otherwise alter it and use it in some way other than the obvious reference. For example, a form looks obviously like legs, I’ll turn it upside down and try to make a head or body out of it. If I can’t make a form unfamiliar, I will even drop it on the floor to change it in some unplanned fashion and then reassemble some or all of the pieces into a different form. This forces me to be more creative in resolving the “how do I make this interesting” puzzle that my creative process is about. In my latest work I have been adding a few pieces custom-made for a sculpture, once I have the main body of the piece created.

Although my sculptures vary, they hold together as a body of work because of their happenstance character and their rough, natural textures. Natural looking and weather-worn textures are attractive to me because they add a freshness to the overall effect—a not overworked feel—while at the same time leaving the impression that the pieces have been around for a long while, perhaps affected by the wear and tear of time.

In the end, I hope people enjoy my work. Because I have other serious pursuits, and because working with bronze is very time intensive, I don't create many pieces. So each piece is dear to me, as I hope they will all be to you.

About the Sculpture

Material: Bronze

Approximate dimensions and weight: H 4 feet; W 2 feet; D 1 foot

Purchase price: \$5,800

For further information about the purchase of this sculpture, please contact Jeffrey Bohl at jvbohl@gmail.com.