

stay inside the lines

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Screen printer John Vogl takes stenciling to a whole new level.

On thebungaloo.com, John Vogl sits on a white carpet littered with dollar bills, Budweiser cans, playing cards, and a set of keys. The bespectacled, brown-haired man stares down at the hodgepodge, a slight frown on his face. It seems he's waiting for inspiration to strike on his next piece of artwork.

A 26-year-old screen printer and Drake University graduate, Vogl is a self-described rambler. Though he's often quick to downplay his achievements—even going so far as to call himself naïve, persistent, and stubborn instead of successful—it's undeniable that he has accomplished quite a bit for someone so young, especially given the risky nature of his freelance career.

Vogl started screen printing when he was in college. "It was the last semester of my senior year, but Drake didn't offer screen printing," he says. "So I just started learning from the Internet. There was a lot of trial and error."

His humility belies his success. Vogl's work now ranges from local posters to art for popular acts such as The Black Keys, Wolf Parade, and Lupe Fiasco. Even he admits he's a little starstruck.

"I was really excited when I got to make a print for St. Vincent because I totally have a fan-crush on her," Vogl says. "The piece I got to do for the Black Keys was a lot of fun because I'm a big fan of theirs—it would have been easy to do 10 posters for them. The challenge was trying to pick one single thought and image to encompass what I like so much about their music." For Vogl, that image was a steam-powered locomotive from the turn of the century.

Despite the growing popularity of his artwork, Vogl still enjoys working for all kinds of clients, whether they're the next Arcade Fire or the cast of a local production. He even recently donated a print to a relief show in Boulder, Colo., that had Phish on the



John Vogl takes a break from playing with Bill Murray's face. (Top to bottom) Vogl is hard at work in his studio. Used paint cans pile up quickly during a screen printing binge. All of Vogl's work is sketched out before paint is ever applied.



bill, which, according to Vogl, is probably the largest act he's worked for.

"There is something really rewarding in being able to work on something I'm a big fan of," Vogl says. "That's kind of the beauty of concert posters—there's a large variety. Whether you're a collector or making the stuff yourself, you're going to be exposed to a lot."

Screen printing, a process best described as making an oversized stencil, is a satisfying way for Vogl to capitalize on making art that imitates the smaller moments in life.

"All the printing is done by hand, all the inks are mixed by hand—there's definitely opportunity for mistakes," Vogl says. "That's part of what defines its charm. It's that little spark in the everyday mundanity, making something grander out of a particular seemingly worthless thing."

Vogl manages to find that spark in everything he creates. For example, his current project is a print of Bill Murray for a show about father figures in Wes Anderson films.

"I'm obsessed with this one expression Bill

Murray's character is making in 'Rushmore,' as he's staring with equal fascination and disgust at his own children," Vogl says. "It's just a pose of him staring off into the distance, and there's not all that much to it, but I've really been enjoying the alternating levels of humor and despair in his face, as well as the challenge of trying to capture and reinterpret that."

What began as a hobby discovered in college quickly morphed into a viable career path—but Vogl doesn't think this is all he's going to do.

"I've always enjoyed having a lot of creative

freedom, but I didn't necessarily set out on this specific career path very long ago," Vogl says. "I've got a lot of other interests I'd like to explore, a little more in the design realm, like textiles or film. I could be doing something in a few years that I didn't know existed or was even a possibility—as long as I'm putting myself into situations where I feel I'm working in a creative environment and contributing."

But for now Vogl is content staring down at life's little mundanities scattered on his workshop's floor. Look for them on a concert poster near you.