Life Altering Health Issues

The Struggles Along The Way
Adapting To Change

A Driven Man

“Art Saved My Life”

By: Kevin Langer
Charles Thomas Close was born July 5, 1940, in Monroe, Washington. Being the son of two artistic parents, he was supported greatly. Close who struggled through almost all phases of school due to dyslexia. Found it difficult to find himself, until his love for art was discovered. Along with Dyslexia, he had a neuromuscular condition preventing him from playing any sports. Along with all that, Chuck’s father passed away when he was eleven years old, while his mother was stuck with breast cancer. Soon after that, Close’s health took a turn for the worst when he was landed in the hospital for almost a year with a kidney infection. Needless to say, his early childhood was very tragic.

This painting called “Mark” is a perfect example of one of Chuck’s styles. He was known for making his paintings so photorealistic that one would not be able to tell, if they were never informed. I have seen this painting in real life and can’t explain how much attention to detail he emphasized and put into this work of art. To really embrace the beauty of the piece, one would have to see it in person and stand close to examine the fine detail and color that he used to make such a realistic piece.
After graduating from the University of Washington in 1962, Close immediately went east to enroll at Yale in the Art and Architecture school to get his Master of Fine Arts degree. This is where he got his signature style “Photo Realism”. Which I talked about in the previous piece called “Mark”. Chuck described this process and style of painting as “Knitting”. Chuck would enlarge the Polaroid pictures and then paint them on a giant canvas. This style was a very brave thing to attempt at this particular time because no one had ever seen such art.

This painting labeled, as “Lucas” is a spin off his signature style of realism. To create this master piece, close begins by taking a photograph of the subject. He then draws a grid over the photo that is made up of boxes, where he vigilantly reproduces on a large canvas each little color and shape with in the little box. Using dashes, small squares, thumbprints, dots of pigment, and maybe even pieces of paper to produce one whole image. I have also seen this painting in life and viewed up close it looks like a blurry distorted image. But you can see all the little shapes and colors put into this work. But instead of analyz-

On of the pieces he is best known for is a painting of the young composer Philip Glass. This portrait to the right was revealed in 1969 and is hung in the Whitney Museum of American Art. It is one of closes best works of art and is one that he is well known for.

This work by Chuck Close was very bold. His pieces blurred and distorted the division of painting and photo, which is something that has never been done before, or anything of this high quality for that manner. His techniques and use of line weight and color not only were peculiar. But they helped the development of the inkjet printer, which is something to feel very fulfilled. By the late 1960’s early 70’s, chuck and his photo-realist paintings had made a staple in the art society in New York City. Being
By the 1970’s Chuck Close with out a question established himself in the world of art and had his pieces in some of the finest galleries around. He was extensively considered to be one of the best contemporary artists in America. He had reached the top of his game, he succeeded in life even though as a young child, was lead to believe he wouldn’t go anywhere in life... but things are about to take a change for the worst in Chuck Close’s life.

This is another piece I have had the privilege to see when I visited the Walker Center of Art Museum. It is called big Self-Portait”, revealed in 1968. This piece has got to be my favorite out of all of his spectacular works of art. I enjoy that he painted himself. I find something so interesting about black and white images and see this peace as a fascinating work. I find myself wondering what the story is behind it. Did he just wake up and is about to have his morning cigarette. Could he be having the annual relaxing cigarette after a pleasurable event with another partner? Or could it be himself after working endlessly on a stressful piece of art? Whatever the right answer is, its something that I don’t necessarily care to know. I love the curiosity the painting makes me feel.

Another one of my favorite by Chuck. It can be viewed at the Minneapolis Institute Of Art. Like Most of his works it is painted with acrylic on a canvas 9 feet tall and 7 feet wide. The date, 1969. As I’ve stated before I’m a huge fan of the black and white images he does. The most important and well-done aspects that he really renders well in this painting and all his other ones are the eyes and the hair. Especially in this one, he made the hair so realistic and it attracts a lot of the eyes attention that one would think this is literally a photograph.
Turn For The Worst

In 1988, Chuck Experienced yet again more dramatic issues with his health when he suffered the terrifying rupture of a spinal artery. The aftermath of this incident was tragic. Chuck was left almost entirely paralyzed, and was told the likely hood of him painting again was slim to none. After undergoing agonizing sessions of physical therapy, in attempts to salvage any lost movement in his motor functions. And despite regaining partial use of his limbs, Close was sadly confined to a wheelchair.

Despite his physical limitations, Close continued his career in art. With a paintbrush taped to his wrist, and with a more abstract style in his approach rather than being precise, Close continues to paint exceptionally beautiful pieces of work and still enjoys painting to this day. His reputation has not diminished in the least.
In his life, Charles Thomas Close has succeeded tremendously. Starting out as a kid with dyslexia who had no clue what to do in life. To finding his gift as being an amazing artist and rising to the top of the art world, only to be hit with a spinal condition leaving him paralyzed. Which did not slow him down at all when it came to his love and drive to produce art. He still remains one of the greatest and was chosen in 2007 as a recipient of the National Medal of Arts. He has been a big inspiration to myself as an Industrial designer and is a person you could learn a lot from.

Works Cited


