

**Narrative: Tyler Godsey, General Manager/Creative Director of 16 Blocks Magazine:
Creative Labs**

Blacksburg, Virginia

Interviewers: Cotter Spratley, Guy LaVigne

10/11/2010

My name is Tyler Godsey and I am the General Manager/Creative Director of 16 Blocks Magazine: Creative Labs. I am currently 29 years old and grew up in Roanoke, Virginia. I come from a great family that is rather large in size. My family consists of two sisters, one brother, and I am right there in the middle. I also have two step-sisters that are younger than I am.

While growing up my mother was very active in the arts community, she influenced my brother and me at a very young age. She had a pottery and ceramics class that she taught in our basement and my brother and I would throw clay around and make these ugly looking sculptures. She would fire them and they would look so cute to her but they were really, really bad [*laughs*]. Just like clay all mashed together. This gave us an appreciation and love for the ability of people to create; we all create in different ways. Some of us create through art and some through business. Other people create through family, but we all have the power to create something unique and beautiful, and I think that everyone in my family lived through that concept.

The idea for our magazine [*16 Blocks*] evolved around just finding a platform for individuals to be able to promote their own artwork, writing and thoughts. Hart and I noticed a huge gap between the people creating artwork and their ability to express it. When we first started this project it was really just a way to bring together local underground artists that really didn't have a forum to express their talent. We feel that Southwest Virginia has always tried to connect through art, but there was never a common thread to pull everyone together.

Before Hart and I were actual partners, we would always help each other out in order to get where we wanted to go. That is what really makes our partnership unique; we both know where we want to be. Not just one month from now but also one year from now and three years from now and we want to help each other get there. Whatever role we can fill in the partnership to make that happen in what we are going to do. As far as the magazine goes, I handle all of the graphic design. Not necessarily all the artwork that is created but I do the entire layout. Essentially all of the graphic design comes through me.

Hart carries a lot of the business support here in Blacksburg on his shoulders. He also does a great job of working with *16 Blocks Presents* by putting on events. We have really been relying on him to bring in some of the resources we have used in the past three years. We have worked with so many great writers over the years, and we have not had a chance to stay in touch with them as much as we have wanted to. We really want to work with these people again but would also like to thank them for helping us get to where we are right now. We really value everybody we have worked with and we really value the efforts people have put in, and the best thing we can do is continue to give people these artistic platforms. Not everyone has a studio or bankroll [to display their artwork]. We are all just trying to make it work for the love of it but not everyone has a platform, and that's what we are working towards.

For instance, there is Dale Gorsky, who was featured in our most current issue. He is 50 years old and has been making art his entire life, but has never had anyone look at his artwork because to him it was a hobby. With that kind of guy that has been doing it his entire life, all he really needed was a platform, which rejuvenated him as an artist. He was creating beautiful artwork but he figured, "you know what, this is awful". We have also featured another artist, Danny Phillips, who has also had his artistic career rejuvenated. It's all about renewing that self of creativity, and it doesn't have to be by making Pablo Picasso pieces to sell for tens of thousands of dollars. It just means that you need to find a creative edge within yourself that gives you that unique glowing feeling that everybody needs to have.

Think about how much art has never been seen by anybody! It is stored away in somebody's shoebox that is thrown away in their own house and it dwarfs the size of the amount of physical art that people even recognize, much less seen. It blows me away, how many people out there just don't let anyone know, it's like a diary or a secret that somebody has one day and you just pop out and you're like, "wow, I had no idea you were such a good writer," "I had no idea you were that good of a painter," or "I had no idea any of this about you because I looked at you, I talked to you, and I thought I knew you and there's another side of you," and it's all about perspective. 'Cause we all have another side that needs to come out.

The most rewarding part of my job is finding undiscovered talent. To me, I think with each issue, the issue is kind of like an economy. You know, it ebbs and it flows, and it rises and it falls. Those are the kind of things I get excited about. Like this issue right here, issue 26, I was super pumped on the cover. I just couldn't wait to see the cover. The first time we see it in print

and then you're like so pumped, the first people you give it to, that's like the giddy feeling that's on the inside. Like, damn look at this, I got this cool thing and they may not be so cool on it as you are, but you're so pumped on it.

To me, the American dream is the most important thing in my life. One of the beautiful things about the American dream is it gives us the ability to go out there and do what we have to provide for our family, and in a lot of places you don't always have that ability. I have the ability here because of all that America stood for and all that America has fought for to come out and put out a free magazine, say whatever the hell we want to say, do whatever we want to, work with whoever we want to pretty much, find a way to make a living doing it and support my family, and the American dream gives that right to me. Tomorrow I can stop doing that and I can go and flip hamburgers at McDonalds, because the American dream affords me that right. I can also stop and decide that I'm going to go write a novel or go and run for president, whatever it may be. But I have the ability at any given moment in this life to go and do whatever I want to do, and do it damn well, and put my ass on the line for it. You can do whatever you want, however you want, whenever you want, and make it work.

To read the complete conversation, please see the transcript. See also the interview of Hart Fowler, editor and publisher of 16 Block Magazine.