



“Sometimes I think passion is embedded in our DNA.” - Gary Taxali

Q&A WITH GARY TAXALI

words by Christopher Massardo

Artist, designer, professor and creator, Gary Taxali was born in India in a city called Chandigarh, but immigrated to Canada during infancy. Taxali grew up in Toronto and began drawing as soon as he could pick up a pencil. Now, Taxali is a worldwide name with his work all across the globe. Sitting down with Taxali, we chatted about how it all began, his career and more.

When did art become your passion, and when did it become a full-time gig?

It's been my passion my whole life but it didn't really resonate as a full time career until I decided to study it full-time after high school. Then, things became serious as a means of pursuing it as a full-time gig. It was an easy decision for me insofar as a passion, but in terms of the career possibilities, it didn't even cross my mind at the time. I just knew I wanted to draw pictures and nothing could stop me. I remember when I was studying at The Ontario College of Art (OCA), which is what it was called at the time before it changed its name to OCAD University, to do an illustration for Saturday Night Magazine. The funny thing was that I was actually doing an illustration commission for Saturday Night Magazine at the time. I started working for magazines and agencies while I was still a student.

Why is it your passion, or why do you think it is your passion?

Sometimes I think passion is embedded in our DNA. I meet other like-minded artists whom I share many traits with, and so I wonder if there is a coding that occurs from birth. The things we like and gravitate towards are personal byproducts of that passion, but I think the genetic makeup to become an artist (or at least want to make it forever and obsessively) is set in stone from the beginning.

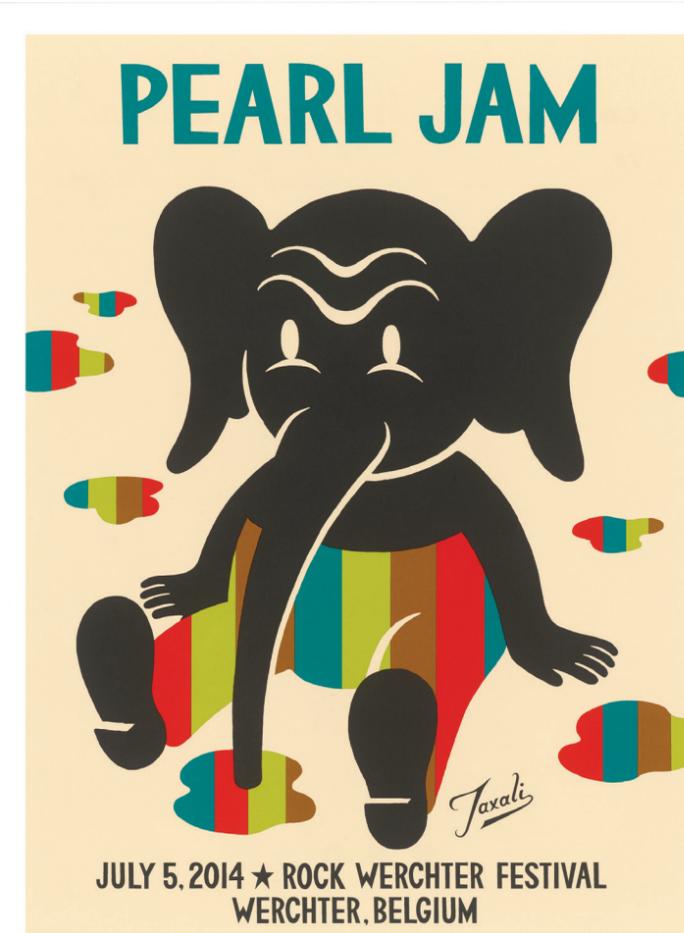
Who is your target audience?

Everyone of all ages, I hope. I'd like my work to surpass language boundaries too. I'm getting invited more and more to exhibit and lecture in other countries, so I think that it's working.

The art world is a competitive business.

How do you feel you stand out?

I think people pick up on the honesty in my work. Everything I love and what I want to say is in my art. It's all a self portrait, really. -



The decisions I make when it comes to my artworks are even out of my hands for much of the creative process is spontaneous. The art world is truly competitive but I combat that by just being productive. I'm always working on a body of work so that keeps me focussed on what's important. It's easy to get sucked up into the scariness (and often pettiness) of the art world, but that's something that I keep outside my mind and studio.

You've worked with Harry Rosen on a collection of pocket squares, how was that experience?

Every time I try something interesting and new, I realize it's a whole new avenue of creating artwork that I had never thought about before. It's an interesting challenge. With the pocket squares, I've never considered things like colours and patterns that someone would wear, I just see it as my artwork; like something from a book or magazine page, or a gallery wall. As my sister describes it, fashion is wearable art. A lot of people actually framed the pocket squares and put them on their walls.

When can we expect the release for the next collection of pocket squares?

My next collection is releasing this Fall. It's called "The Classic Man" collection and will be available at Harry Rosen. It's all about the "classic" guy – the guy who travels a lot, likes traditional things... and I have updated and reinvented some common style imagery such as planes and the paisley pattern we see in men's accessories to a more modern feel.

What and/or who inspires you?

I love Depression era typography, packaging, ads and the music. I love the work of Ray Johnson, the Fleischer Brothers, The Russian avant-garde and 60's garage rock, Andy Warhol, and the films of Jim Jarmusch.

Having said that, no artist has ever influenced me. I enjoy the comradery and the shared dialogue of having that artistic expression with other people, but I've never been influenced by anything they've ever said or done.

