

Canadian 15-year-old already sells his art - now he's out to rock fashion by launching streetwear brand RBLB

His paintings already sell for thousands of dollars but now Evan Sharma is preparing to shake up the world of streetwear

Concept behind new brand is maximising human potential, with his sneakers inked with portraits of people like Einstein and Jean-Michel Basquiat



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Canadian art prodigy Evan Sharma with sneakers designed for his label RBLB.

When Evan Sharma was 10 years old he went to the Louvre in Paris, a visit that would shape the young Canadian's future.

“What really struck me about the paintings was not the images themselves, but how they made me feel,” says Sharma via e-mail from his home in Kingston on Lake Ontario. “When I returned home, I started painting non-stop.”

And he means non-stop.

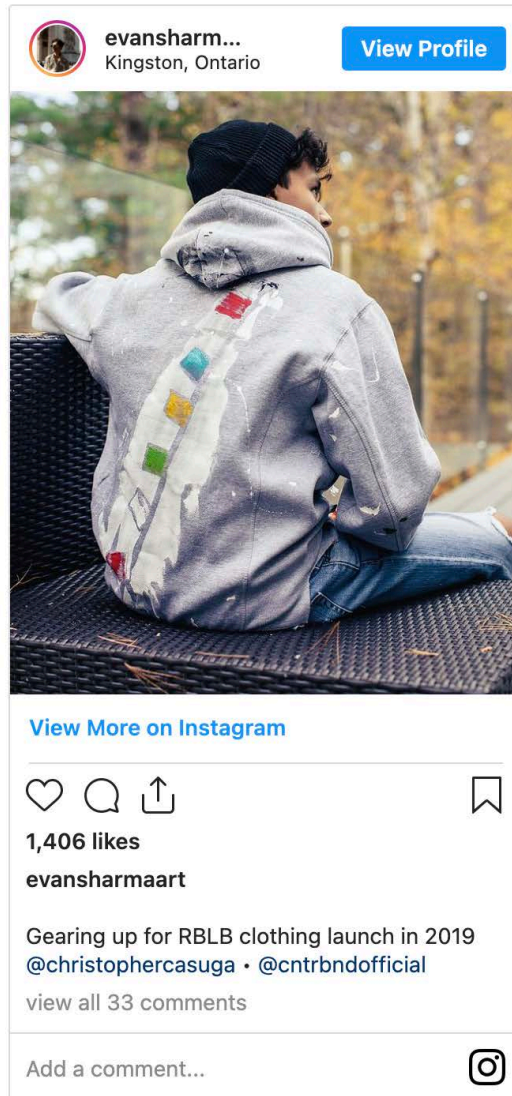
He gained national attention when he became the youngest artist to present their work at Toronto's Artist Project. He was 12. Now 15, he has sold paintings to collectors in New York, Los Angeles, Dubai and Toronto, with his works fetching as much as US\$20,000.



He has also used his talent for good causes. "In 2017 I helped raise funds for the Canadian Olympic team by donating a piece that I created at 7,000 feet [on top of Sun Peaks in British Columbia]," says Sharma, a competitive ski racer.

Now he is following another passion: streetwear fashion. "I've been collecting sneakers for a few years," he says, with his favourite brands including Off-White, Heron Preston and A-Cold-Wall.

Then he started painting on his sneakers. And on his clothes



“One thing led to another and people started asking if they could buy my designs and sneakers,” he says.

Now he is about to launch RBLB – Right Brain, Left Brain – a streetwear label that reflects his love of art and fashion.

“The concept behind the brand is that to maximise human potential you need to use both your creative or right brain as well as your left or analytical side,” Sharma says.

“I use my right brain for my art but my left brain for science fair projects. I have done a lot of research on how we can help the environment through altering the microbiome of cows.”



Sharma painting on top of Sun Peaks in British Columbia to raise funds for Canadian athletes.

He says RBLB, which will formally launch in a few months, is different from other sneaker brands because of its message. He has also used his art to show the idea behind the brand.

“I have chosen a portrait of Einstein for the left analytical brain sneaker and a portrait of [US artist] Jean-Michel Basquiat for the right [creative brain] shoe. I will also be using other elements of my paintings for my hoodies, shirts and pants.”



Sneakers from RBLB.

Despite being so young, Sharma remains true to his creative process.

“The main focus is to create interesting pieces of art and clothing ... focusing on the creative process has allowed me to build a following of people who are interested in my work.”

His advice for budding entrepreneurs is to stay true to your heart.

“The most important thing for young people is to focus on your passion. If you are creating anything, whether it is a science fair project, a piece of art or clothing, you should do it because you are passionate about it and the process means something to you.”



Sharma says he would love to have a presence in Asia.

He says it is vital to be social media savvy on platforms such as Instagram (he has more than 10,000 followers to reach potential customers, and to sell on platforms such as Shopify.

“People often DM [direct message] me on Instagram or write to my website asking about my work. I have over 1,000 people on my list who are notified when a new piece is completed. A lot of requests for commissioned pieces of art also come in through my website or Instagram.”



Sneakers by Sharma.

Asia is also on his radar.

“I don’t have any Asian connections yet, but I am definitely open to collaborating with Chinese stores,” he says.

“I’m planning pop-ups to introduce the brand in big cities such as New York, Toronto and LA ... I’d love to do the same in Asia and have a presence in Shanghai, Japan and Hong Kong.”

This article appeared in the South China Morning Post print edition as: Meet the 15-year-old artist about to shake up the world of streetwear

