



HOLR GETS UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH RISING ARTIST EVAN SHARMA

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Evan Sharma isn't your average 15-year-old. He's a rising artist paving the way for young creatives, and inspiring others with his art.

Not only is he creating paintings that are selling up to \$20,000 with collectors from New York and Dubai, Sharma is also launching a brand sneaker brand RBLB. The term is an acronym for Right Brain Left Brain, highlighting the importance of both sides of the brain working together. The Kingston native has also made appearances at New York Fashion Week's *Fashion's Future Stars* event.

HOLR chatted with the young artist on inspiration, his favourite designers, his success, and his future aspirations.



HOLR: How did you first get inspired into painting? What got you into appreciating art?

Evan Sharma: I have always been very interested in learning and building things. When I was 7, I built a small house in the backyard with a rainwater collector for plumbing. I guess those were my first steps at installation art. But it wasn't until I went the Louvre when I was 10, that I really fell in love with traditional and contemporary art. To me it wasn't necessarily what a painting looked like, but how it made me feel. That was very interesting. When I returned back to Canada, I started painting on everything that I could find.

When I was 12, I applied to a juried show in Toronto and sort of forgot about it. A few months later, I ended up being accepted, but they didn't realize that I was 12. Since then, it has been a very interesting journey.

In terms of what I appreciate in art, there are a number of things. Some paintings I like because of the composition, others their colors or lighting. But the paintings that I like the best are the ones that tell a story.

HOLR: You decided to combine art and streetwear fashion — How did the idea of RBLB come about? What's it all about, and where did the inspiration come from?

ES: Over the past number of years, I have been interested in fashion from both the creative and the technical sides. For instance, because I was expressing my ideas on canvases, and I like sneakers, I thought it would be cool to start creating on sneakers. Sort of like thinking about the sneakers as a canvas. Because I also like to do technical things like slalom skiing and race in sailing regattas, I really also like technical concepts. Ideally, RBLB would exist at the intersection of both creativity and technical design.

The brand, itself, stands for Right Brain, Left Brain and is based on the concept that if you really want to have a significant impact, you need to develop both your right (creative) side and your left (analytical) side. I think that this is something that I try to live by. Most people know that I work in art and fashion, but I also really love science. In fact, I go to a specialized science program at school. For a few years, I did research in an area called the microbiome. One project that I worked on was manipulating the microbiome of a cow's rumen to lower methane emissions. I was able to show that by introducing an enzyme into their digestive system might substantially lower greenhouse gas emissions. I am actually working on a painting describing this science project.

Since I am a big mountain skier and love sailing, I am also very passionate about environmental issues, because if global warming continues, I won't be able to do either of these activities. I plan to also explore this theme through the brand.

I think I created RBLB to help tell the story about things that mean a lot to me personally. So the brand stands for living at the intersection between art and science, and it will have a pro-environment theme.



HOLR: Who are your favorite fashion designers right now?

ES: There are a number of designers that I really like. Because of my interest in technical things I would love to work with Stone Island. One of my favorite books is *Ideas from Massimo Osti*. I also love their Ice jacket which changes colors as the temperature changes. I also really like the way both Off White and Burberry are using street art in their designs. I also think that Louis Vuitton is excellent because I think that their fabrics and manufacturing are some of the best, and I think that Virgil Abloh is taking their creative side to the next level. I also am a big fan of Heron Preston, A Cold Wall, and Fragment.

HOLR: What is your all-time favorite painting, and why?

ES: I think that Francis Bacon's Painting 1946 is probably my favorite right now. There are so many elements that I love about it. I have recently been painting with a darker palette and I think this is more representative of those tones. I also like some of the symbols that Bacon used to depict political ideas and figures from WWII. I also enjoy the use of anatomy, because I really like doing dissections in my biology class, and learning about anatomy is both an important scientific discipline and is a very important part of art.

HOLR: If you could collaborate on a project with any artist (in either music, fashion, visual art) who would it be?

ES: In terms of people, I would love to collaborate with, I would pick Tom Sachs. I think that way that he takes a central theme like Space and NASA and then explores it through diverse mediums like installations and sneakers is very interesting. I actually spend a lot of time doing installations for Halloween! I usually start designing a set a few months in advance and have different scenes planned out. It is pretty cool because people from all over the neighborhood have started to help out and the news has broadcasted from our place last year. So I guess, maybe Tom Sachs and I could collaborate on my next Halloween project!

In terms of fashion designers, I really like Junya Watanabe's work. The way he constructs and deconstructs things is very interesting.

HOLR: Your work has received a lot of critical acclaims so far – what do you think contributed to your success?

ES: Well, I think that getting into Toronto's Artist project at the age of 12 years was something that started things rolling. I would also say that perhaps the way I approach my art, as more expressive than just showing something is interesting to a lot of people. For instance, when I create a landscape, I am more interested in having someone feel the emotions of being in that place, as opposed to simply showing the place itself. One of my favorite paintings was created at 7000 feet. I was attending an alpine ski racing camp, and it was such a majestic place, that I decided I had to paint there. I think that a large part of it was because very few people actually get to be up that high and to be above the treeline.

One thing that I didn't anticipate was how quickly my paints would freeze at -20 degrees. When I got the painting back to the lodge, the paints thawed and changed the painting significantly. I decided to bring the canvas back home on the plane with me because of what it had been through. Interestingly, the painting ended up selling at auction and raising significant funds to sponsor a Canadian athlete to go to the 2020 Olympics.

In terms of RBLB, I am hoping that the brand will resonate with people in terms of both how the clothing looks and what it represents. I really hope people who are interested in both art and science, sort of a renaissance person will embrace it.

HOLR: What can we expect from you in the future?

I think that I would like to continue with my artistic journey on both canvas and clothing and sneakers. I am also very interested in the environment and will be likely doing some more research in the area next year for my science fair project. I am really looking to launch RBLB over the next few months and will plan pop-ups in both Toronto and NYC.



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or check out the RBLB website at www.rblb.ca (<http://www.rblb.ca>). (Launching Spring 2019!)