

Impact Statement

Regan Sherman, Grade 11.

The Savior of the Cranes, 2022.

Digital art, 8.5 x 11 inches.

Hopewell Valley Central High School, Pennington, NJ

Unsung Hero: Jacob Valentine

I was inspired to pick the story of Jacob Valentine because he seemed to have a very unconventional life compared to most people. He grew up living in the wilderness and I thought that was very unique. In some ways, he also reminded me of Bob Ross with his temperament and background, seeing as both were war veterans and loved nature.

My work expresses my hero's character in a number of ways. I aimed to give him a jolly look (like Santa Claus) to denote his warm personality, as well as including his name signpost that he holds in one of the recorded images of him. I wanted to include this signpost as a reference to his love for nature since it has a wilderness feel due to being made out of old imperfect wood. I also of course had to add sandhill cranes flying in the background, since his main accomplishment was preventing their extinction. As an environmental scientist, he's like an animal caretaker so I put a baby crane in his beard. To start, I created my portrait on my iPad in digital format. Unlike how I usually draw digitally, however, I started with a super rough sketch then blocked in the color, and very chunkily started refining the pieces of the drawing, like how sometimes people do with oil paint. Since Jacob Valentine's images online are not in much focus, I had some leeway with the fine features of the face that I defined as I went. Usually, when drawing digital, I start with the sketches that I refine until I have a final solid outline to use (like in cartoons) and from there I color and render. I wanted to try and be looser with this portrait, so I tried a different approach.

I think this portrait project has changed my ideas of how so many important people in history rarely get recognized for their work. Jacob Valentine has close to zero information about him online, as well as only 3 images of him. I feel like it's an artist's duty to make sure these people are known because art is used universally to draw attention to pressing issues or things, be it through advertising, logos, murals, etc. By painting these unsung heroes we are giving them the memorial they deserve.

I think I can share my work with others through either social media or just showing people in person, but I think I can help them experience what I've experienced while creating this portrait by encouraging people to recognize just how important art is, how literally everything decorative you see is a form of art. There's website design, logos, color design in public spaces, landscaping, murals, and public art pieces. Without art, our world would be much duller, and I don't think people quite realize how present it is in our lives. Generally, when people think "art", they think of fine arts and the occasional sculpture you see in parks. I'd like people to realize just how much more art is than that.