

by Elena Cruz | Nov. 17, 2017

Patrick Tapp spends much of his workday sitting atop an ornate rug, facing a desk that is cluttered with paint brushes. He leans over a table in the Resident Arts office and turns his body away from the Resident Arts gallery space, located one room over. The gallery is filled with half-drawn arm braces on paper.

Yet Tapp, an artist, said he spends most of his time in the studio watching Netflix. He laughed when he said it, but he also squirmed in his seat.

“I don't know how to define myself as an artist yet and I'm in a situation where I'm being strongly encouraged to do that,” Tapp said.

This Columbia local needs to make enough art to fill the 400-square-foot of gallery space at Resident Arts by Dec. 1. He will present his work and a concise artist's statement to the community by that date, which marks the third month and conclusion of his residency program at Resident Arts. Tapp said his goal is to show community members how art and sports connect, but he said he is feeling the stress as he progresses with the project.

“What we don't focus on is this part, where I'm at right now, the struggle,” Tapp said. “The decision-making, the focus or lack thereof – that's the hard part.”

Through his artist residency, Tapp receives studio space and stipend to complete a set of artworks. He has made different pieces so far, including acrylic paintings of athletes in braces and charcoal drawings of bandages.

The work combines sports with art, which is an idea that stemmed from Tapp's upbringing. This 30-year-old grew up in Columbia and attended every MU home football game

except one – which he missed for a surgery – between the ages 5 and 16. He stayed in Columbia for college, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in fine arts at Columbia College in 2015.

“For me, I see that journey for an athlete very similar to the journey of an artist, and that’s why I’ve been trying to relate those two, somehow, together,” Tapp said. “I think they both require technique and skills and practice and self-discipline.”

His work covers the unseen apparatus of sports injuries, lessons from sportsmanship and irony in fans’ laziness when they watch sports games on television. Tapp is trying to combine these themes while working with materials unknown to him, as was recommended by Madeleine LeMieux, Resident Arts founder and director.

“Especially with the way technology is, and the way we have so much access to knowledge, people aren’t being one thing anymore,” Tapp said.

LeMieux, 35, founded Resident Arts in 2014, and its first residency program began in spring 2015. Tapp is the fourth participant of the program. This year, there was one resident in the fall and one in the spring – in the previous years, only one artist worked with Resident Arts annually.

LeMieux said she decided to take in two artists because both Tapp and Carina Jimenez, the spring artist-in-residence, proposed impressive plans for their work in the program. All the artists have worked in the Resident Arts studio and office, located on Walnut Street.

“I think he feels guilty that he’s not so in line with what his proposal was, but I keep trying to assure him that that happens every time,” LeMieux said. “It really does – everyone has a grand idea about what they’re going to accomplish and then the reality of it is different.”

LeMieux said that the residency program acts as a “stepping stone” for artists. LeMieux also said that although Tapp is “very cynical,” she is confident he will benefit from the program.

“Out of all the residents that we've had, he's probably there more than anyone else has been, which I appreciate,” LeMieux said.

Tapp is in the studio at least 10 hours a week, and he also works part-time at Windsor Street Montessori School. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, he teaches art to children ages 5 to 12 alongside co-art teacher Matt Hall.

“I think that’s the hope: To want to teach is to want to have an impact,” Tapp said. “The kids are enjoying the art classes because it's art, but I don't know if I'm giving them the best learning experience yet.”

When working with the students, Tapp maintains a “balanced” teaching style, Hall said.

“He has a great sense of humor and cracks jokes, but he can also be very firm and knows how to lay down boundaries,” Hall said.

In addition to teaching art classes together, the two men also went through Columbia College’s art department at the same time. Hall, 25, said he looked up to Tapp during their years at the university.

“He was always trying to push the limit of what he can do with painting and what a painting can be,” Hall said.