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THE CHOUINARD FOUNDATION

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# GRAND VIEW

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Sam Clayberger, acrylic on board, 18 x 24

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## CHOUINARD: Past and Future

### *A Post-Punk Perspective*

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DAVE TOURJÉ

I still chuckle when I think about what a history buff I've become in the last couple of years. Guess I can thank Perine for that.

See, I come from a generation that seemed to be cut loose from any logical stream connected to a potentially rich and useful past. We just didn't really care. We were the de-evolution of the hippie, rebellious, for sure, and inexplicably pissed off. To see this rebellion in its extreme, go rent Penelope Spheeris's film "The decline of Western Civilization" some time. It documents the late 1970s L.A. punk scene for visual and sonic reference.

I'm not a sociologist – just an interested observer, but I'm beginning to believe that the same social axe that fell during the 70s and contributed to white middle class youth anarchy was a reflection of the philosophical axe that fell on Chouinard a few years earlier. The war cry seemed to be "X %!Z#" everything that came before – none of it applies!

Out of this seemed to emerge educational philosophies that may or may not have worked. In one university art class on creativity the "professor" wanted to take psilocibin mushrooms in order that we could explore our "creative potential." Another teacher shunned hard won drawing skills, saying "we don't care about that here." Obviously, the question "what the hell do you care about?" emerged rather quickly.

Much to my parent's dismay, I dumped my fine arts scholarship on the table after two years, shaking my head in disgust, yet some twenty years later, remain perhaps the only fine artist from my college class of 50 – so go figure. Thinking back, there didn't seem to be any connection to what was being taught and the pertinence of what came before. I remember getting an F on a report I did on Pop Art (which I liked) because the "professor" felt that I bought into the "Warhol/Pop propaganda machine." Of course my own consciousness was steeped in the same attitude, so victimhood doesn't work either.

So now that I'm basically grown up, have a job, sell my art, have kids, etc., I'm observing something rather interesting: My kids and I listen to the same music. We skateboard and snowboard together. Hanging out with them, and their friends, I can see that they're very cool, very hip in their musical and esthetic sensibilities – and they actually think things from the past are cool. There is an interest and respect for "old school"! Maybe there's even something to derive from it! What a



Drawing detail from the Chouinard Foundation's Elin Waite collection. c. 1970s

concept!

This doesn't mean that a younger generation bows or should bow to the past with some blind, holy homage to pay (this didn't happen at Chouinard – witness the feuding and foment between departments). No. It just means that as they become artists they will find their own voice and develop their own esthetic grammar more thoroughly and actually contribute more heavily as artists if they understand what came before and where they fit in – the artists, movements, shifts, and turns in the California art scene that ultimately led to where they now sit. And therein may lie the future and possible importance of what we are doing with the Chouinard Foundation . . . with our shows (particularly the July museum show) and efforts to preserve and display the significance of Chouinard's convoluted yet storied past, we can more easily build a foundation dedicated to a valid esthetic future.