PAINT AS YOU LIKE

a film by RYAN FENTON-STRAUSS

FEATURING MICHAEL I. FENTON

RYAN FENTON-STRAUSS

DIANA FENTON

FRANK VARRARO

GAY MALIN

WILLIAM FOX

What is success? What is failure? What is art?

www.paintasyoulike.com

PRODUCED, DIRECTED, EDITED RYAN FENTON-STRAUSS SOUND DESIGN YURI REESE ARCHIVAL RESEARCH DARYN ELLER

FEATURE DOCUMENTARY:	**PAINT AS YOU LIKE (2016)**
RUNNING TIME:	**64 MINUTES**
PRODUCED, DIRECTED, EDITED BY:	**RYAN FENTON-STRAUSS**
FEATURING:	**MICHAEL I. FENTON**
CONTACT INFO:	**Ryan Fenton-Strauss** **ryan@fentonarts.com**

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A son takes an emotional journey through his father's life as an artist and explores universal themes. What is success? What is failure? What is art?

SYNOPSIS

Fresh out of art school, Michael I. Fenton sold his first painting to the Cleveland Museum of Art. At the age of 25, he was well on his way to making his mark in art history. Michael's son, filmmaker Ryan Fenton-Strauss, takes us on a journey through 50 years of his father's work, from abstract expressionism to narrative painting. ***Paint as You Like*** weaves together biography and art to tell an often comical and sometimes painful story of an artist's life. Father and son, uniquely connected by their passion for art, explore universal themes. What is success? What is failure? What is art?

DIRECTOR BIOGRAPHY

Ryan Fenton-Strauss dedicated more than two decades at The USC Shoah Foundation, innovating technology for the preservation and storytelling of historical narratives. He oversaw collection and preservation efforts and directed numerous short documentaries, exhibits, and educational products, employing virtual reality and artificial intelligence to enhance the documentation of survivors' and witnesses' memories from genocides and mass atrocities. His award-winning directorial debut, the documentary Paint as You Like, delves into his father’s artistic life while examining themes of success, failure, and the essence of art. Ryan holds degrees in Theater and Film Production from Brandeis University and Chapman University.

Who by Water, Who by Fire, Who by Thoracic Aneurysm (2015)

Michael I. Fenton
oil on birch panel 31.75x 41.5

PAINT AS YOU LIKE - STILL FRAMES

Q & A with Ryan Fenton-Strauss

Q: Why did you make this film?

R: Why did I do this thing? Well, I think it goes back to when I was asked to be a videographer for an interview with Michael Hagopian, as part of my work at the USC Shoah Foundation. Michael was a 97 year old survivor of the Armenian Genocide, and he had spent his life making films about it. During the breaks, we would have conversations. He told me was planning his next documentary, which he was going to shoot in India. And I had the thought, if this guy at 97 years old with no film crew was running around the globe making films, then what was my excuse? I told him I was thinking about making a film about my father. He told me that his greatest regret in life was not putting his father on camera while his father was still alive. And that cemented in my mind that I needed to do this.

Q: What originally gave you the idea to make a film about your father?

R: I think this story has always been with me, and in many ways it's plagued me my whole life. The need to make this film comes from my own psychology. I feel like I've been burdened by an unhealthy outlook on my work: when I get involved in my projects, there's this feeling, this manic energy - I *need* to make it. My whole ego gets wrapped up in the process of making it, and by the time it's done, I hate it and I think it's terrible, and I'm nobody and nothing, and what have I done lately? So I think a big part of making this film was about trying to get to the root of my own anxiety.

Q: Why does your film open in a graveyard?

R: I think everyone has to deal with this: their parents are going to die. But for me there's this added thing that there's this attic full of paintings. My father managed to keep painting for 50 years, and a lot of it is really good. I think there's something sad and painful that this stuff is just sitting there. I think that in the back of my mind, I was thinking, wouldn't it be a great end to the story if this film somehow gets noticed, and that helps preserve his legacy? In a way, that would be the ultimate outcome.

Q: What was the hardest part about making this?

It's hard to think of something that wasn't hard about it. That's the Fenton thing. That struggle is always an important part of the work. And so when you look back, you say, what went smoothly?

Q: What are you most proud of about it?

I don't do proud.

Q: Ok, so, if you did do proud?

R: I think just climbing the mountain, you know?

Q: So can you say something about your relationship with your father and how that played into your wanting to make a movie about him?

As a kid, I really did spend a lot of time learning about his paintings. And when he has ideas, now, even today, he sends them to me. He knows that I'm going to reject the first six that he sends me. And he was always very critical of me, too, but that gave me an openness towards criticism and it pushed me to do something better. Obviously, I was very close with him growing up and the bond stayed very strong throughout my adulthood.

Q: What do you think of your father's paintings?

I think growing up, I couldn't explain all the abstract work to my friends. I used to think, for years he did all this abstract work, and then he eventually actually learned to paint. But then, spending time with it while I was making the film, I could see what was going on, I could appreciate it more deeply. But I actually think with his more recent narrative work, his painting skills have been getting better and better. For me, there are times where the ideas and the skills come together really nicely. That's what I like the best, when the whole thing seems to connect. Now I think his skills are actually quite remarkable.

Q: What is the relationship between painting and filmmaking in your documentary?

When you stare at a painting, your eyes dart around and you can walk up to it, and pull away. I would say that part of my goal was to give the viewer the experience of being able to engage with the painting even though they can't, physically. The other thing I tried to do was to allow the feel of the paintings and the feel of the older photographs to create a visual style. I had this treasure trove of super 8 film from my grandfather. If I didn't have that, I wouldn't have a film. Most people have some of that, but do they have it of their grandparents and their father as a child? I got really lucky. So I was able to allow the feel of that super 8 film, which has that beautiful scratchy look, to influence the visual style of the film. So for me, it's about where the medium and the message collide.

So what is success?

Completing it. I'm still uncomfortable with the idea of success. There's a need for praise, but I only want enough to know that I didn't completely screw it up. I don't want to spend my time saying, 'wow, I'm great'. There are moments when I can say, 'okay, this part came together'. But as I look back over my work, I want to be able to say that I'm getting better. For me, success is pouring all of your energy into something, completing it, and then being able to do look at it and say, 'this is what I like about it and this is where I want to go next.' I think that's it.

CREDITS

Featuring	MICHAEL FENTON
	RYAN FENTON-STRAUSS
	DIANA FENTON
	FRANK VARRARO
	WILLIAM FOX
	GAY MALIN
Produced, Directed, Edited	RYAN FENTON-STRAUSS
Sound Design	YURI REESE
Archival Research	DARYN ELLER
Special Thanks	KATIE FENTON-STRAUSS
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	JUNE BEALLOR

Archival Footage, and Photographs Courtesy of

Alan Boyde
archive.org
Central Press/Getty Images
Harvey Croze/Cranbrook Archives
Department of Biology and Public Health Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Eliot Elisofon/Getty Images
Estate of Alice Neel
Kent State University Libraries Special Collections and Archives
The Ohio State University Archives
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Music

"Requiem KV626: I. Introïtus. Dies Irae"
Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Courtesy of Beatsuite

"Ragtime Betty"
Composed by James Sylvester Scott
Performed by João Pedro Cunha and
Pedro Carlos Silva

Arrangement by Pedro Carlos Sil
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

"Hootenanny Holler"
David Tobin/Jeff Meegan

Courtesy of Audio Network

"Mazl"
Courtesy of Joshua Moss and
The Cincinnati Klezmer Project

"Die Hochzeit Des Firago - Act IIIb"
Composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
Courtesy of Musopen

"Bugle Boy Stomp"
David Tobin/Jeff Meegan
Courtesy of Audio Network

"Funny Bunny"
Composed by Bob Bradley
Courtesy of Audio Network

"Mood Swing"
Composed by Terry Devine-King
Courtesy of Audio Network

"Songs without words, Op. 19b A minor"
Composed by Felix Mendelssohn
Performed by Vadim Chaimovich
Courtesy of Musopen

"Piano Sonata no. 14 in C#Minor
'Moonlight', Op. 27 no. 2"
Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by Paul Pitman
Courtesy of Musopen

"Songs Without Words, No.27 in E Minor, Op. 62"
Composed by Felix Mendelssohn
Courtesy of iStockphoto

"Enchanted nights"
Composed by Ray davies
Courtesy of audio network

"Egmont Overture Op. 84"
Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by Musopen Symphony
Courtesy of Musopen

"Symphony 5 in C minor Allegro con brio"
Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by Skidmore College Orchestra
Courtesy of Musopen

"Quartet No 10 Op. 74 Presto"
Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by US Military Band
Courtesy of Musopen

"Symphony No 3 in E Flat Erocia
Op 55 Allegro Con Brio"
Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by Musopen Symphony
Courtesy of Musopen

"Sonata No 8 in C Minor Pathetique,
Op 13 Adagio cantabile"
Composed by Ludwig van Beethoven
Performed by Paul Pitman
Courtesy of Musopen

"Introduction et Rondo Capriccioso,
Op 28"
Composed by Camille Saint-Saëns
Performed by Skidmore College Orchestra
Courtesy of Musopen

"Fantasy in C 'Wanderer', D. 760"
Composed by Franz Schubert
Performed by Paul Pitman
Courtesy of Musopen

"We Shall Overcome"
Performed by Joan Baez

Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

“Don't Stop 2 ”
Little Violet/Bob Bradley
Courtesy of Audio Network

“Blue Rag“
Composed by Tim Garland
Courtesy of Audio Network

“Only in New York”
David Tobin/Jeff Meegan/Charley Harrison
Courtesy of Audio Network

“Shomer Yisrael”
Composed and Performed by Steve Stuhlbarg
and
The Cincinnati Klezmer Project
Courtesy of Cincinnati Klezmer Project

“Sonetto 47 del Petrarca”
Composed by Franz List
Performed by Années de Pèlerinage - Italie
Courtesy of Archive.org

“Hobgoblin's Ball”
Composed by Ray Davies
Courtesy of Audio Network

“That Swing Thing ”
Ted Lewis-Big Band-61-70
Courtesy of Audio Network

“Für Alina”
Composed by Arvo Pärt
Performed by Markus Staab
Courtesy of Musopen

“Années de pèlerinage”
Composed by Franz Liszt
Performed By oberto Poli
Courtesy of Archive.org

“Envy”
Composed and Performed by Dan Skinner,
Adam Skinner and Simon Skinner
Courtesy of Audio Network

“Nimrod no9 from Enigma Variations, Op.36”
Composed by Edward Elgar
Performed by Davis High School Symphony
Orchestra
Courtesy of Musopen

“Sonata for Cello and Piano - III.
Recitativo- Fantasia. Ben moderato”
Composed by César Franck
Performed by Paul Pitman
Courtesy of Musopen

“With Pleasure (Dance Hilarious)”
Composed by John Phillip Sousa
Performed by United States Marine Band
Courtesy of Musopen

“Nocturne Oubliée in C sharp minor”
Composed by Frédéric Chopin
Performed by Markus Staab
Courtesy of Musopen

“Shtiler Nign”
Composed and Performed by Joshua Moss and
The Cincinnati Klezmer Project
Courtesy of The Cincinnati Klezmer Project

“Symphony No. 4 in E Minor, Op. 98 - IV.
Allegro Energico e Passionato”
Composed by Johannes Brahms
Performed by Musopen Symphony
Courtesy of Musopen

"Mandola"

Composed and Performed by Ian Hughes
Courtesy of Audio Network

"Un Bel Di"

David Tobin /Jeff Meegan /Julian Gallant
Courtesy of Audio Network

"Ain't Lookin' At You"
Paul Michael Harris/David Weston
Courtesy of Audio Network

Dedicated, with love, to the Grandchildren:
Leila and Eli Fenton-Strauss, Gabriel, Zachary, and Ariella Fenton-Zeira