



See Beyond My Skin

Nomad interview with and Nigel Ousey

Nomad talks about his Graffiti art, fashion, and the beauty of Blackness

Nomad: Hey what's going on Nigel? This is Nomad.

Nigel: Hello this is Nigel from See Beyond My Skin and today I am with Nomad, a Germantown artist and fashion designer. Thanks for being with me today, Nomad.

Nomad: You're welcome. Thanks for having me.

Nigel: Researching your story, I know you have a love for fashion and graffiti. What was the attraction?

Nomad: As far as fashion, I have always had a keen sense of individuality. I've always liked to express myself through fashion and I've never really liked looking like other people so there was one thing about my fashion taste that I was able to express myself in and be very unique. And graffiti, that was one of my earliest recollections of art that I can remember. I actually had an uncle who did graffiti and every birthday he would make graffiti jackets or graffiti shirts with our pictures and our names on them and stuff like that and just always seeing graffiti growing up in Germantown, seeing it in different places. It was always intriguing to me just the different techniques, the different places they were at and then just seeing things that you like- not really knowing what it was but seeing something that you really liked and then you see it more and more. And then as you get older you learn about what it is. That was really my initial attraction to graffiti and fashion. Especially with graffiti, how you know what that word says but you look at it like, that's not the right way to spell it, but it still looks cool because the writer was able to put it in such a way that it catches the eye. Those are my initial attraction to it.

Nigel: That's really cool.

Nomad: Thank you

Nigel: How did you get the name Nomad?

Nomad: Actually it is a play off of my real name but it's funny because one thing I have learned just from always playing around with my name and learning about what a Nomad was, the older I got, I kind of grew into a nomadic lifestyle. I was moving all over the place- not all over the place, but in different parts of the city. I moved from Nicetown to West Philadelphia, back to Germantown. I was in Mount Airy. I was in a bunch of different places just moving all over but in my younger years, I was basically in Germantown and Mount Airy and West Oak Lane. It kind of fit me. The more and more I started doing my work and my graffiti, I had to actually end up becoming anonymous. I guess I didn't have to, but I decided to take that route and that was the

name that I chose and based off of everything I just told you, it was pretty easy and it fit really well. Yeah, it is a playoff my real name.

Nigel: That is really interesting. It is kind of like a mix between your name and something that is kind of synonymous for you.

Nomad: I would say that and especially more so over 2016-2017 when I started my art journey. I consider my art journey nomadic because it's all over the place as well, including my personal Journey where it's just like I'm going to different places in like three different years, I lived in three different places. It's funny how some things that just fit and you don't know where it's going to go but it kind of takes time and just fits perfectly. So that's basically how that happened.

Nigel: So, you are an incognito artist. Does that give you any freedom or is it like part of the thrill?

Nomad: That is a very interesting question. One thing I can say is it's refreshing for me because I would consider myself, I guess, an introvert so I'm weird. I don't really like getting praise and attention. It's not really my thing. I like to just do things and be able to just live my life. So, as far as being incognito, it's a double-edged sword because in a case like this, I would love to come out and meet you and have you come by my space. When I had my first show I would have just loved to be able to talk to people about my artwork but on another note, it was still good. I like it because I'm able to get my people's honest opinion on my work. I could literally ask somebody. One of the things I would do at my show during the opening reception -I told people, anybody who knew who I was like my friends and family, I just told them don't acknowledge me as the artist. So I was able to walk around and talk to different people about the artwork and hear their honest opinion as opposed to them just telling me something that they think I might want to hear just because I'm the artist. Do you get what I'm saying?

It gives me the flexibility to critique people's real feelings and just be a regular person because that is how I feel. A lot of times I forget that I do artwork that people really enjoy, that's one of the things too, where I would say is like a double-edged sword because as much as I would like to give in to all my art, to put myself into all my artwork I'm still human and I'm just looking to relax sometimes if that makes any sense.

Nigel: It is something to put less pressure on you, or something where you can kind of see a third-person perspective of you.

Nomad: Yeah that's very true. I never thought of it that way but it's very very true. Also one of the things, just saying, fame scares me. Being famous, it's not something that I ever wanted to be so one of my things is I would always love to just be well off, be able to take care of what I need to take care of. Fame was never something that I was striving for. It's kind of funny that I have become, I guess, famous or infamous, in some ways. It is a weird dynamic in some situations where it's like I might want to apply for an artist-in-residence or I might be somewhere and I'm talking to somebody about my art and it's not like I can tell them that this is what I do. I am still learning balance. Honestly, it is really fun, I will say that as well- just to be able to do things and have people not know it's you but they just know that somebody's creating this stuff. That was a really good question. I appreciate you for asking that. I think about that a lot but not as in-depth as I just did.

Nigel: Activism is a big part of your art. How do you see the connection between your art and activism?

Nomad: I feel like it goes hand-in-hand. I feel like the artist's responsibility is to speak on things they feel passionate about and that's the beauty of art. So, regardless of what side of the fence somebody stands on, art is a place where you can express yourself so I definitely feel like it goes hand-in-hand and I'm using art as a tool for activism. I feel like it's something that not everybody can do well and honestly, I didn't think that I really was doing that well I just was really right in how I felt and I didn't know that many people felt the way that I did, When I started writing what I was writing, I didn't know that I would get that much support. I literally was just speaking for myself and the daily situation that I would go through. It was just me voicing my frustrations and my opinions and my beliefs. I wrote the things I felt like I wanted to see. That was really my initial reasoning for why I was using my art as a platform. I am relatively new, I am like an infant in my artist journey. I haven't been creating as Nomad for more than five years. But before that I was always pretty vocal about things I believed in. A lot of people, they would tell me, even before I went down the Nomad art journey they said that they always looked for me on social media because I was always talking about news and other things that people felt were beneficial- always talking about Black businesses and everything Black, that was my mission- to highlight Black people at all cost. It was something that I have always been extremely vocal about. People would always come to my page to find out about this person or that person. That was always in me so being that it was in me, it translated into my art work. I like making abstract art, but I also like making art with messages. If anything, one of the messages you know I am going to be shouting from the rooftops is about Black power, Black Community and the overall beauty of Blackness.

Nigel: Wow! Does your art get affected by current events that are happening and with activism communities?

Nomad: It's funny, so yes, and no because I don't really watch the news or pay attention to current events or anything like that. I kind of stay in my own bubble. A lot of things I spoke about years prior- a lot of messages and themes that were heavy in the work that I did, came into fruition during 2020. And during this year, just the power of the numbers of the working class- capitalism, just Black people being even seen as people in America- so many different issues, and topics, the Black dollar, Black businesses, the Black self image- these are the different things that I have spoken about from when I started, now seem to be the theme and what people are paying attention to. Honestly, I just speak on how I feel don't really get caught up in too much of what's going on because it is too much. There is still a lot that I need to learn and a lot that I am trying to teach other people. I got a long way to go. I research and do a lot of studying. The only current event I really pay attention to now is basketball.

Nigel: That is really interesting how you combine things in your life and the world into art. You have a clothing brand called Good Samaritan. What does that name mean to you?

Nomad: The name Good Samaritan was a name me and one of my best friends came up with. It was a company idea we came up with a while ago. When I met my partner, we talked about it and she was telling me that she thought Good Samaritan would be a really good name for the

brand. And that was a play on the Good Samaritan from the bible. One of the mantras was be careful not to do your good work in public in order to attract attention and that was something that I kind of lived by especially in this day and age where with social media everyone does things for attention. I wanted people to do things just out of the kindness of their heart. Whatever you were going to do, do it because you were going to do, don't do it because there is a camera watching you or because there is something for you to gain. You should just be good. That is where Good Samaritan came from. One of things I wanted to do was highlight the people that I really admired growing up and now. It was almost a play where I could be using different historical figures and people that were important to me. And paying homage to them. I had a lot of my older pieces with Keith Herring on it because he was one of my favorite artists and Romare Bearden, John Michel Basquiat, and pieces with artwork from Emory Douglas, and I used it like my medium and I was so free on it. It started with me just making clothes for myself. And then people would put in custom orders, they were like, hey can you make me this, or can you make me that? And then I started creating a collection. It is something that I really like and have to get back into but you know- life, a lot has been going on. But I am definitely getting back into the groove of the fashion side.

Nigel: I want to ask you two questions that I ask everyone I interview. How do you see yourself? And how do you fear that others perceive you?

Nomad: How do I see myself? That is a very good question. I see myself, as funny as it seems, I see myself as a child in this world, just learning. Every day I am trying to learn. And not childlike in my mannerisms but more so childlike in my eagerness to learn things I want to learn about. I feel like I constantly want to learn and try new things. So that is one of the reason it is kind of hard - I bounce around a lot from thing to thing because I like experimenting. And how do I **fear** that others perceived me?

Nigel: Yeah, How do you fear others perceive you?

Nomad: Fear? What does that mean?

Nigel: What is the thing that you would least want to be perceived as?

Nomad: uhmhhh. What would I least want to be perceived as? I guess a bad person. Funny, because I have been perceived that way. But honestly, that is something I don't really think about too much because even perception is not reality. It is your reality but it is not reality. It is funny because perception is life and life is funny because no matter what you do, you will have people that like you and people that don't like you and you will have people that are kind of on the fence, so I don't spend too much time thinking about how people perceive me, I just try to put out the most honest version of myself. Some people may like it and some people may not like it but at the end of the day I am just being honest with myself. And that is all I can be. That is a really interesting question. The first thing that did come to mind was a bad person but there have been a lot of things said about me and ok, so if people knew who I was then any problems or issues, I might have to face them in my everyday life but Nomad is like this fictional

character I guess Nomad is someone people can place all their frustrations and blame on and it is ok. Do you get what I am saying? It is a real person but it is not the real person so we can blame him for all the graffiti around here. I'm sorry if I am not being more direct with your questions.

Nigel: I think your answer was good.

Nomad: Thank you Nigel. That is really how I feel about that.

Nigel: Thanks so much for calling

Nomad: I really do appreciate you for taking the time to reach out to me. I really appreciate the fact that you appreciate the work that I do. Cause sometimes I kind of forget that I do stuff that people like a lot and I guess they say that the people who think they can change the world are the ones who do. I think I am just a little crazy to think I can and so that is all I am trying to do. I am trying to inspire others to do the same. When I talk to people, they say oh, you're such a great person and I want them to know I am really just regular and I do what anyone else can do. That is something I want you to think about too Nigel. I am glad you are not being silent on this and in your life journey. I am glad you are speaking up and speaking out to the things that you like and the things that you don't like. The fact that you are starting so young is not going to turn into anything but success. That is really what I feel for you.

Nigel: Lastly, I have one more question. Where can people get some of your clothes?

Nomad: I have a website. It is www.shopgoodsamaritan.com I also have things on my Instagram. For me, that is one of the ways I can connect with so many people because I am kind of off the grid. Social media is how I keep in contact with my family and friends and the people that support me. At <https://www.shopgoodsamaritans.com/> you can see some of the things I worked on maybe four or five things are on my website right now.

Nigel: ok I will share that with my viewers. Thanks so much for agreeing to be interviewed.

Nomad: thank you for reaching out to me. It is really a blessing and I am humbled and I appreciate it.

Nigel: This was Nigel for See Beyond My Skin and today I was speaking with Nomad. Stay strong and stay true to your story.