

---

Senior Projects Spring 2018

Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

---

Spring 2018

## I Promise I'm Not Racist

Yashar Hashemi  
Bard College, yh7900@bard.edu

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2018](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018)



Part of the [Fine Arts Commons](#), [Interdisciplinary Arts and Media Commons](#), [Other Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Painting Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

---

### Recommended Citation

Hashemi, Yashar, "I Promise I'm Not Racist" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 393.  
[https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj\\_s2018/393](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2018/393)

This Open Access work is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been provided to you by Bard College's Stevenson Library with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this work in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@bard.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@bard.edu).

**YASHAR'S  
Painter's  
Handbook  
Abridged**

## 1. Tackle difficult and/or uncomfortable subject matter

It is important to delve into uncomfortable and personal subject matter as it gives insight to your audience about struggles people other than themselves face. Additionally it can be relatable to other people who have been in similar situations that are looking for someone/something to connect with. This is especially important considering the fact that the art world is dominated by white people. Not only will it give them a sense of what it's like for a brown person to live in the United States/be a part of the art world, it will give you a leg up as it allows you to explore subject matter that is unavailable to white people. Additionally it gives you leeway to explore matter that white people are often too afraid to explore for fear of political incorrectness/ criticism. I can make paintings about anything a white person can (eg materials, color, inoffensive/peaceful themes etc...) but white people can't make work about the themes I choose to explore.

2. Invite your audience to explore uncomfortable subject matter by using humorous and playful elements like playful collage, humorously depicted figures, obscene stereotypes etc...

It is important to add humorous and playful elements into your work for a few reasons. One: it allows your audience to take a break from dealing with the intense subject matter. Two: it makes your work shy away from seeming self-pitying. You are not trying to make people feel bad for you/your position, you are trying to give them insight into what your position is like. Three: The idea of someone having preconceived notions of another based on how they look is so absurd/ridiculous/stupid that it is funny. Four: you yourself need breaks from dealing with the subject matter. It is too draining to constantly be thinking of such depressing things. Five: It uses people's discomfort and relatability with stereotypes as an entry point into the piece.

3. Keep it confusing by crossing boundaries that make people question whether or not your pieces are politically correct

Confusing your white audience is important as they tend to have cookie cutter ideas about racial issues that usually sound like "ME WHITE PERSON. ME FEEL BAD FOR BLACK PERSON." The conversation about race is multifaceted. It should not be a white centric conversation as it currently is. By crossing PC boundaries, I am bringing that to the attention of white people. Believe it or not, it's not just white people who are racist. I will even say that Iranians can be racist against Iranians etc... black people can be racist against black people.

When I say to "keep it confusing" I mean specifically for your white audience. People of color are already fully aware that racism is not just from white people. People of color are fully aware of the complexities of racial issues because we have to bare the weight of them everyday.

#### 4. Don't be afraid of not being politically correct

It is not the job of the artist to be champions of morality. That is an elitist viewpoint (placing artists at the top of the food chain). The job of the artist is simply to create works of art. Don't let political correctness take away from your subject matter. Be daring and willing to accept backlash.

Your art is not going to make a significant impact for the good of humanity. You will make a much greater impact by using your time/money doing other work (which you already do). The idea that "Oh, art is so important, it changes the world" is annoying and stupid. The only thing you're going to do is make rich white people feel smarter/ more cultured and that's fine. Don't play morally confusing game where you try to justify your art making. If it's important to you then you should make it. If you want to help other people then go and help other people. Art making is not for helping other people, it is to make tangible representations of your ideas. Volunteering your time and resources will help people. Do both.

## 5. Get over your lack of desire to do tedious things

You have a good sense of patterning that can make a piece exceptionally beautiful. I know that it's really annoying to paint patterns as they take a long time, but it's really important to do so. The beauty that patterning adds also adds to the complexity of the subject matter in a similar way that humorous elements do.

## 6. Make the audience place their own stereotypes onto your painted figures

By placing an obscene stereotype next to a more ambiguously depicted person of color will facilitate the placing of stereotypes onto the ambiguous figure by the audience. For example, if you paint a black caricature and put a generic brown person next to it, the audience will see it as a black person and a latino person or a black person with a arab person even though it is not specifically depicted as being anything. The audience will look for any slight semblance to some minority (or any form of stereotype of that minority) and place it on the figure themselves.

## 7. Remember that people aren't the only important things in a painting. Incorporate objects, foliage, vehicles, animals etc... with significance

It is true that depictions of people can carry a lot of weight and significance, but there are ways you can heighten said significance. A person in a suit is way different than a person in street clothes. A dude wearing Jordans is way different from a dude rockin crocs. What stores are depicted? What type of back pack is someone wearing? Flip phone or iPhone? City, suburbs or wilderness? Benz or a 2002 Outback? Think of these things!

## 8. Add subtle things that show that you actually know how to paint

Use a lot of different painterly techniques. They look cool and add visual depth to a piece. Sure, the perspective is usually crazy, but make sure that everything fits into that crazy perspective and if something doesn't, make sure it doesn't. Pay attention to lighting/ shadow. Have fun with it. Paint a lot of weird amateurish figures and have a really accurately depicted one thrown in there. I don't know, figure it out.

## 9. The amateurish painting style comes from an urge to rush through a painting due to laziness

You don't have all day to sit around and paint. Bust your paintings out and be done with them. Figure out some techniques to make it go faster while still retaining all of the visual and thematic details.

## 10. The amateurish painting styles comes from an urgent need to create a physical, tangible representation of your ideas

You have a lot of thoughts and you need to get them out somehow.

## 11. Don't be afraid to make blatant references

Don't worry about flexing art history knowledge. Sure, it may be pretentious but it adds to your pieces. You are trying to sell your work and white folk will feel smart if they can see and understand references that not everyone would.

## 12. Think of and explore undiscussed nuances of your oppression

You're kind of lucky because there isn't a whole lot of writing on the Iranian American experience. Think really hard about the differences between an Iranian American and an American. Differences culturally, differences in how other people view you. Differences in thinking about how other people view you etc...

## 13. Stop and reconsider pieces or parts of pieces and work back into them

I know you're a "one and done" kind of person, but it is important to really think about each part of your pieces because not every part always fits in. IT'S OK TO START OVER.

## 14. Make all of the pieces related yet different, distinct and important

You paint in a collage style, sectioning off parts of the canvas for a different scene. Each section needs to be unique and necessary, but it also needs to fit in with the painting as a whole.







