

CHEYENNE BOULLARD

CREATIVITY AS A LIFESTYLE

BY JOEY MASON
PHOTOS BY MACALA WALLACE

THE WALLS OF CHEYENNE BOULLARD'S ROOM are a corner-to-corner collage of drawings and paintings, gifts and awards, printed photos, pencil sketches and posters, layered and overlapping. A chain of colorful string lights pinned to the walls and an open bay window provide all the light necessary. Her cat playfully paws at the bottom edge of the blanket. On the windowsill sits an assortment of plant pots, and descending down the wall behind the record player, a tangle of leaves and flowers. She sits on the bed, surrounded by everything she loves. Be it through art, music, or clothing, self-expression is no stranger to Boullard. Her creativity now extends to any medium she can find, but as she explains, it began on paper. **"ART JUST HAPPENED FOR ME.** One of my first memories is being so proud of these horrible unicorn drawings I would make as a little kid. They looked like balloons and I don't think they even had legs, but I was so proud of them. From there, it never stopped. I think if you like something enough, you'll do it. Of course nobody ever said art is easy, even if you like it; it's difficult for me to make art. But I do think it's even harder to become an artist without this constant sense of "I have draw *right now*," Boullard said. She began to speculate about a future in art. "I'd like to be a tattoo artist, or a comic book artist, or maybe both. I always wanted to write stories. I used to write a lot when I was younger, but then I would rip the pages out of my journal and throw them away. Then my mom would take them out of the trash and put them in a box. I was always mad because my stories never turned out right, so I focused more on drawing, and instead of being a writer I became an artist. But the same thing happened a lot with my art; I would get frustrated and throw it away, and my mom would again pull it out of the garbage. But even though I would throw it away, I would still keep doing it; I would just try again. **I NEVER STOPPED ART BECAUSE IT WAS SO FUN.** So maybe I could combine the two one day and write and illustrate comics. I know if I make it a career, though, I'm going to have to sell art to people. But I always feel bad about it whenever I make a picture and somebody wants to pay for it. I'm like "I'll just give it to you!" I always thought it was a weird thing to charge money for. It's art, I can make another one. But for things that mean a lot to me like this painting, it might be different. Let me grab it." She launched herself to the opposite end of the room and retrieved a canvas depicting a woman in a flowing red dress. "I really, really like this painting. The colors are completely wrong and it's overall pretty bad, but I loved making it. So if somebody really wanted this then yeah, I might charge them for it. I think that's all it's about; it's my relationship with the piece rather than

what the person who's buying it thinks. It's for that reason that I've never done commissions or anything like that. **ART IS PERSONAL FIRST, SO I WANT TO MAKE ART THAT RESONATES WITH ME."** Boullard expressed herself through music alongside art. "I really like music even though I don't think of myself as musically inclined. I know that my forte is paper and pen, but music has a totally separate place in my heart. In sixth grade I thought band was lame, and I didn't want to join. Then in seventh grade all my friends were in band, so I changed my mind and joined band; I always wanted to become a percussionist. I didn't become a percussionist because I could not keep a beat. So instead, I got hold of the clarinet. When high school came around, I joined marching band. Marching band was really weird, especially being the kind of kid who got on the bus, went to school, got on the bus, came home, and did nothing outside of that. We went all over the state, and I improved a lot as a musician. Recently, I've tried to play the drums and the alto clarinet, and I'm also learning how to play the saw. **THE SINGING SAW."** Boullard recounted the events that lead her to her least conventional instrument. "It was winter break my freshman year, and I started listening to a lot of Neutral Milk Hotel. I fell in love with them and I was amazed by all their weird instruments." She jumped up and over to her record collection and slipped one out of the row. Printed on the worn, red-bordered cover was a faded photo of pastel merry-go-rounds. She flipped to the inside cover and pored over a handwritten list of instruments used on the record. **"THIS IS THE FIRST NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL ALBUM EVER: ON AVERY ISLAND.** You can tell right away, this is some weird stuff. They've got tapes, air organ, xylophone, fuzz bass, and various Indonesian instruments." It was just such a unique sound and I couldn't get enough of it. I listened to *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea* and I heard this one voice in the whole instrumental cast, and I was like 'what is that?' So I looked into it and I found out the dude that was playing it was named Julian Koster, and he was playing the saw. One day after that I went down into my basement and I noticed that we had a hand saw. And I mean, it's the modern day. Who uses hand saws for cutting wood anymore? You play it with a bow but at that time I didn't have one, so I would use this." She reached toward a shelf full of trinkets and produced a simple wooden mallet. "There was this old Native American woman that gave me this a long time ago. I would use it to find the notes, like this." She placed the handle of the saw in her lap and bent it vertically into a contorted 'S' shape, then tapped

the saw with the mallet near the center. It produced a resonating tone, which she changed the pitch of by carefully bending the tip of the saw back and forth. "After I got good at that, I ordered a very cheap bow off of Amazon, and I've been using that ever since. Every saw has its own voice, and learning songs on it is really interesting. Finding the right notes consistently is quite the challenge." Boullard summarized her creative philosophy through her unique affinity for fashion. "In seventh grade, my mom got mad at me and took all my black clothes. And I wore just about all black, so I was left with only a few things. That's why my fashion sense is so weird. I took these mixed up clothes and I had to make them seem

like me, so I would draw on them to make them unique to me. Now I love to make clothes. I pledged to myself that I would never, ever buy clothes new ever again. I think the fashion industry is the worst thing in the world; I don't like the way they exploit people. Fashion can be a very mindless thing, and I think you lose the relationship with the things that you wear when they're made for you. Having that relationship with everything you come into contact with makes you more rounded as an individual. A woman named Celeste once told me 'surround yourself with everything you love,' and I try to do that. **SO FAR, I THINK IT'S WORKING OUT PRETTY OKAY."**



"SURROUND YOURSELF WITH EVERYTHING YOU LOVE."



1. Cheyenne Boullard playing her singing saw.
2. Boullard's cat, Echo.
3. Boullard surrounded by her artwork.
4. Two of Boullard's paintings
5. Patches, buttons and writing on Boullard's jacket.

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