

## Interview – Dave Muller



Photo Credit Ari Markopoulos

If you are lucky, once in a while you find an artist that helps you remember why you started getting into art in the first place. I first saw Dave Muller's work in 2004 at his show *'I Like Your Music'* at Blum & Poe, and at the time was just a fresh-faced college kid, only beginning to think about getting involved in the fine arts. I walked into this room full of his drawings of massive record sleeves – vibrant, colorful, and full of life – it was one of the first times that I remember feeling truly enthusiastic about art, not simply because I thought

it looked cool, but because it seemed to speak to something about life that I was really excited about. It was a turning point for me in the way I interacted with art, and I've never thought about things the same way. For me, Dave Muller's work is all about the good things that make life worth living – good music, good friends, a little messy, a lot of color, and a lot of fun. Dave has been one of my favorite artists since that fateful day, so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to talk to him about his work, his alternate life as a DJ, and his recent wall drawing at the new Cowboys Stadium.



**When did you first start making art, and when did you first consider yourself a professional artist? When were you able to quit your other jobs and focus completely on your studio practice?**

I knew I was going to be a serious artist, if that's what you mean by professional, in my mid-twenties when I was in grad school. After school I had various jobs building things; first freelance, than as an artist's assistant. Beginning in the middle of 2000, I was on my own, scraping by on sales. Two years later I was starting a family and I took a job teaching and running a fabrication shop for the grad program at Art Center in Pasadena. I quit in August, 2004.

**You are also a celebrated DJ, did you grow up playing any instruments? When did you first start spinning records?**

I began playing the trumpet at nine. In junior high I played most of the brass instruments: trumpet, baritone, French horn, sousaphone. A rabid music enthusiast ever since I can remember, I began djing at KDVS (UC Davis radio station) in the beginning of 1984. Worked in college radio for about six years. After I finished Cal Arts in 1993, I put together a sound system and ...



**I read somewhere you spend almost three-thousand bucks a month on music – that is craziness – most people don't buy music anymore, they just download it... What would you say to someone who 'steals' all their music online?**

I think that \$3000 figure is going to follow me around for a long time. All I can say is that was 2007. These days it's much, much less.

I started to notice in the late 80's that the walls between various discrete musical factions were beginning to crumble. While that was generally an improvement, it divorced the musics from the philosophical stances formerly (maybe in my dreams) associated with them. A Mohawk haircut might get the shit kicked out of you in the American south in the 80's, but in the 90's a green Mohawk was a fashion statement. So there were things to be gained and lost with these changes.

Fast forward to the post-Napster situation, where people are downloading music from blogs & whatnot. There's always more to know. I just wonder with all this volume that some of us are mistaking breadth for depth. Then again, when compilations of Congolese music by Franco get reviewed by Pitchfork : <http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/13820-francophonie-vol-2-1980-1989/> : something is going right.

I download tons of stuff, and I've only been buying more music.

**What was the last CD/LP you bought? What bands have you been listening to recently?**

Bill Dixon – Tapestries for Small Orchestra

<http://dustedmagazine.com/reviews/5430>

I'm a big fan of Bill Dixon, especially the solo trumpet pieces, and will buy anything he puts out.

Sergio Rodriguez – Dias y Flores

Selda – Vurulduk Ey Halkim Unutma Bizi

<http://www.dustygroove.com/item.php?id=9wnkg5srd>

Nancy Lesh/Kulkarni – Various Cd's of Ragas on cello

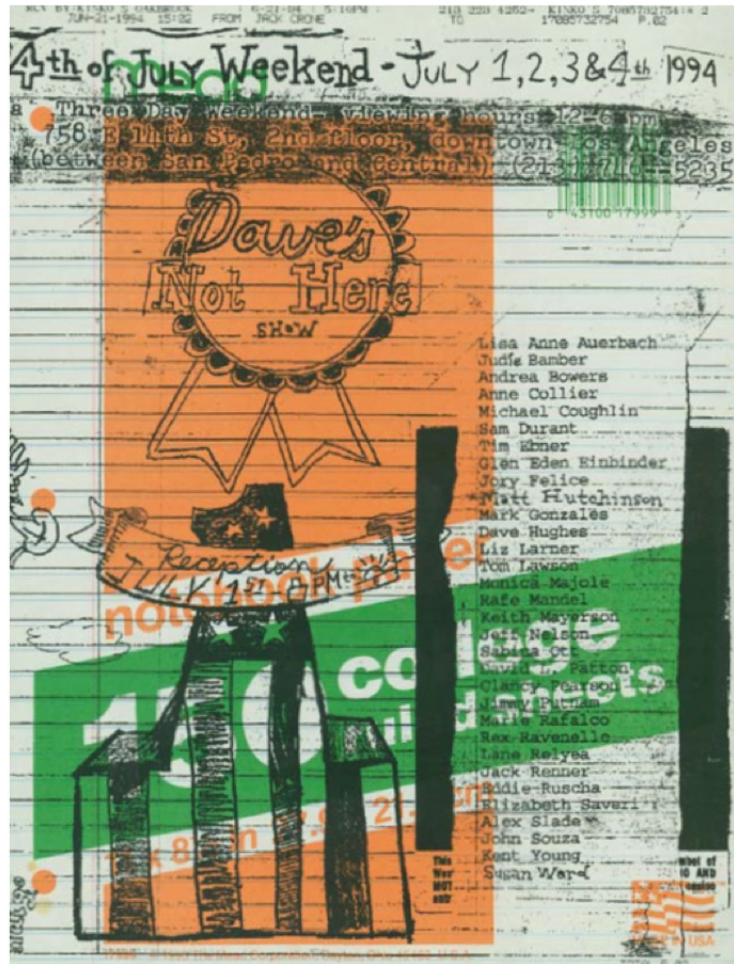
<http://tinyurl.com/yar9xnj>

**Favorite album from '09?**

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Three Day Weekend flyer (with Jory Felice)

**You were the brains behind the 'Three Day Weekend', a mixture of art show, music, food, and general good times. Can you explain what these events were for those who aren't familiar, and can you talk about where that idea came from and how you made it a reality?**

Three Day Weekend is a nomadic artist-run project space I ran from 1994-2004. I had used my studio at Cal Arts as an art space, holding one-day shows of my peers and whoever else was interested. After I graduated I came up with the TDW concept as a way to hold events/shows in the "real world". Shows were generally three days long, taking place on holidays and their weekends. The opening night would be a big party, with music (sometimes live bands). The next few days would be more like a gallery with regular hours.

**Do you still hold these exhibitions, and if not, why?**

The 6 year hiatus corresponds to lack of my own space to hold TDW events. I've got a space now and I've been working on how to insert TWD into my current life.

**I read an article that raised some questions about your role as artist/promoter in relation to the TDW events. What role do you think promotion plays in the contemporary art world?**

Promotion seems to be interesting to people as a topic. Quite frankly, I couldn't care less. I'm not in this to prop up my career or build a "reputation". I'm in this to do/see/experience interesting things. Things that I think should exist in contemporary society. I'm interested in a larger notion of cultural economy than one where the concept of "promotion" holds any sway.



Working on Solar Arrangement

**You recently created a wall drawing at the new Cowboys Stadium. How did that project come about, and were you surprised that there was an effort to prominently feature contemporary art in that setting?**

Pleasantly surprised. They contacted Blum & Poe through an art advisor. I proposed something using photoshop to mock-up an image. It actually looked much like the finished product, when viewed from the same vantage point.

**You said in an interview that "this work will be seen by more people in one week than all the other work I've ever shown combined." How does that make you feel?**

Certainly something to respect. Good.



Solar Arrangement

**What response do you hope viewers get when they see your work in a public setting as opposed to in a gallery or museum?**

In this case, I was hoping the work would be interesting enough to someone who had to wait in line to get food at a game or concert. It's different than the rarified gallery/museum experience. But when I DJ, I don't play what I'd listen to around the house. I'd like art to work on a number of different levels.



**I have to ask you about the top 10 record paintings. How did you come up with that idea, and why do you think there is such overwhelming admiration for these works?**

I love lists and I love music. I love reading about personal lists, top tens, etc. My top ten drawings are a way I can visualize that information: a concrete artifact of a nexus of cultural vectors. They are interesting to me. I'm pleased if others think they are too.

**I saw that you made a top 10 for the president, Mr. Barack Obama. That is totally awesome! Did you just make that up yourself or did you actually get to talk to him?**

I got the list of top ten songs from this article:

<http://www.blender.com/WhiteHouseDJBattle/articles/39518.aspx>

It came out in '08 when he was running for president. I wish I could have a conversation with him, but I fear I might be shy.

**What is the appeal for you in reproducing/re-imagining hand-drawn replicas of printed matter?  
What was the initial attraction, and why have you continued to work with this idea?**

Printed matter is so ubiquitous in contemporary culture, but the virtual web-based world is usurping the printed text. Text is moving to the screen.

I went to grad school at SVA in New York for a year and had a part time job at a place that mounted and restored collectable posters. Being around all those interesting combinations of text and image opened up my eyes/mind.



January 2007, According to NY Times (Help)

**Any upcoming projects you want to tell us about?**

A show at Anthony Meier in San Francisco in June. Probably all balls (disco, flower, vegetation) and maybe some circles.

Currently accumulating 365 zips (long single record drawings) from records I listen to (sort of a day-to-day diary) for a monumental show. Where? I don't know yet.



Dave Muller lives and works in Los Angeles. Find more at [Blum & Poe](#) & [Anthony Meier](#)