

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

NEW YORK ^{the} Strategist

What Artist Marcus Leslie Singleton Can't Live Without

December 12, 2023 | 10:00 A.M. | By Marcus Leslie Singleton, as told to Simone Kitchens



Photo-Illustration: The Strategist; Photo: Marcus Leslie Singleton

We asked painter Marcus Leslie Singleton — whose debut solo show, *Return From Exile*, opens December 14 at Mitchell-Innes & Nash — about the “mysterious” oil color he uses the most, the grocery bag he throws art books in, and the work boots he wears in and outside the studio.

South2 West8 Red Grocery Messenger Bag

This is the bag I use every day. I throw groceries in it and use it for art supply store runs or just to transport books. I have a lot of art books that I reference, but they're kind of big. I can fit a laptop and a book in here. It's also a good size for just a pack of bananas or whatever you need. It's versatile and stylish enough — and it folds up in your pocket.

Lyra Color-Giants Colored Pencil – Black

These are jumbo coloring pencils. I'm not sure if they're marketed towards children — they might be — but I just like the fact that they're a heavier, denser colored pencils. The weight of the pencil actually helps it naturally kind of glide across the paper, and it creates really beautiful images. Depending on how hard you press, you can get different contrasts. I use these every day. I'm an artist that draws every day. I found them at Artist & Craftsman

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

Supply back in 2016. I've been getting the same colors this whole time: a burnt sienna, a dark brown called umber, apricot, and black.

Williamsburg Oil Colors - Paynes Grey (Violet)

Williamsburg Oil Paints makes high-grade oil colors. They're made here in New York, so they're local paint and pigment makers, which is great. I use oil specifically, and the color I use the most is called "Paynes Grey." The reason I like this color so much is because it's kind of in between grey, black, and purple. So when you add white to it, it becomes like a silvery, purpleish color — you know how streets are kind of not black, but not gray, they're like that dark grayish color with a purpleish hue to it. I use this color for lots of shadowing and shading, and then I use it for a lot of asphalts. I use it to paint sidewalks, street scenes, buildings, and windows — like tinted windows. Sometimes I use it as black, because when you layer it, it becomes almost black, but it still has this purpleish hue to it, so it's not quite black. If your eye picks up on it, you get a little curious. You're like, *Wait, this isn't black, but what is this?* It's a very mysterious color, which I like.

Nintendo Switch 'Splatoon 3'

Honestly, I play video games probably more than I should, but I've always been a Nintendo kid. This game is kind of niche, and the people that play it, love it. And then the people that don't play it are like, *Yo, what the hell are you doing?* It's kind of like a video paintballing game, but you're a squid, and so instead of paint, you shoot ink. And since you're a squid, you just have an infinite amount of ink, and you can just ink the opponent's territory, graffiti style. It's kind of like an art squid video game.

Y/Project Evergreen Mini Cowboy Cuff Jeans

These are my favorite jeans. I get compliments every time I wear them. Sometimes I wear them with cowboy boots and people think I'm wearing denim cowboy boots. Then I pull my pants up, and they were like, *Wait, what?* Sometimes I wear them with sneakers. They're not bootcut or anything, but they just have this kind of western vibe that I like. I saw them on sale, and I was like, *You know what? I wonder if I could pull these off.* They're not something I would normally buy, but when I got them, I was like, *Oh, these are cool.* Now I wear them all the time.

Sennheiser HD 560S Wired Headphones

I was looking for a cheaper alternative to AirPods Maxes. These are from a cool German company. I can't hear anything with them on, even when there's no music playing — it's a nice break. Sometimes you don't want to hear anything, you just want to be in your zone while you're painting or even at the house. I like to listen to classical music when I paint. But when I don't feel like playing it on the speaker, I'll put on the headphones and really zone out. This is kind of embarrassing or maybe not, but I like Blood Orange, Dev Hynes, I like his music. And I was looking at one of his album covers, and he had a pair of these headphones on and the logo's kind of unique. So I looked it up. He had a different pair, his were almost like an old school eighties-style pair. But that's how I found out about the brand, and then I researched it.

Seed DS-01 Daily Synbiotic

Got to have these. I have a very sensitive gut, especially if I'm traveling. We went to Mexico recently and these definitely helped. My nutritionist prescribed these to me, and I could just tell that they were working. I sometimes don't believe that vitamins work, but with these, I actually felt a difference. Less bloating, less all that stuff.

Escoda Clasico

These were recommended by a friend who used to be a professor at Tyler. She's very knowledgeable about painting in general. She suggested these based on my painting style; she was like, *I think you should check out the Escoda Clasico.* So these are kind of a new find for me, I just started using them this year. Before I wasn't very

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

particular about my brushes. I was using brushes I found at Michael's on sale, just budget brushes. And they were fine, but these brushes have actually changed how I work. They're high quality, and they last a long time. For me, the firmer the bristle, the better. These have resulted in many of my favorite paintings.

Eytys Tribeca Boots – Black

I'm wearing these right now, they are tried and true. I wanted a pair of boots that were stylish enough for me to wear outside the studio, but also if I dropped a wood panel on my foot I wouldn't have to get it amputated. These are a good marriage between the two. And they look even cooler now that they have little paint splatters and stuff on them. If I'm leaving the studio to go to a dinner or whatever, I'll just wear these with whatever I wore to the studio. I've had them for about a year, they're still holding up. I think I'll have them for a while.

Nikon Coolpix A

I've had this camera since 2016. I've had it repaired twice since I carry it everywhere. I took it to Lisbon and dropped it down some stairs, so I had it repaired there. It's just been through a lot with me. It's a point-and-shoot, and it's pocketable. And the cool part about it, it has a full sensor, like an actual DSLR camera. So the images are really beautiful — even for night photography, they come out great. I actually shoot some of my artwork with it too, if I need it for my website or Instagram or something like that. And then sometimes I reference photos I've taken for paintings. Those photographs get turned into paintings.