

About Me



“Greetings and thank you very much for taking an interest in learning more about me as a creator. This document will cover my journey to get to this point in significantly more detail. I hope you’ll be along for the journey and, if you have any questions or work inquiries, follow me on my [socials](#) or e-mail me at:

mavericklobo2024@gmail.com

Thank you!”

Kellen Zanders | Maverick Lobo

Big Dreams, Little Talent



It all started with a 17 year-old naïve dreamer with big plans and none of the skills to pull it off. Prior to attending the Minneapolis College of Art and Design in the Fall of 2013, I spent my teenage years creating work for the furry fandom—an online subculture that encapsulated my fondness for anthropomorphic characters and storylines — under the idea that I would one day be like Robert Kirkman (The Walking Dead was exponentially gaining popularity at this time) and make the next big American Comic Book and be rich and famous...(ha...)

Jump to my time at MCAD and it was clear that, while I had enthusiasm and passion for creating for comics, I was very much behind the skill level of my fellow students. Whereas they spent their high school days drawing and creating, I did sports and only ever created as a hobby (without studying or practicing like I should have). My primary skillset was in digital illustration, a field that the comic program at MCAD didn't cater to at the time (*as of writing this, [I believe that has been adjusted.](#)) Insecure, naïve, and more than a bit arrogant— I developed a chip on my shoulder to compete and be better than my classmates. After all, the better I was, the more likely my dream would come true right?

The Original



This was my original fursona named KZ under the Kzmaster “brand”. Kzmaster was a name I had created in the 7th grade and carried with me all through high school as I built a little small following on art websites like Deviantart (prior to the Wix buyout in 2017), Transfur, and Furaffinity. I always really enjoyed the concept and storytelling of the werewolf and transformation trope (You can blame 90’s cartoon and media for that) and made a sona that reflected that.

The goal was simple: **Make the Kzmaster brand popular and profitable.** I would use the skills MCAD would teach me and make my many different projects. I wanted to be just like the artists I grew up admiring and, one day, be a studio that facilitates other creators’ projects.



Created by KZma



It goes without saying, in the beginning of my MCAD career, I was simply not good. I didn't have a handle on the traditional media they forced us to use, I knew nothing of anatomy, line-weight, or blackspotting, and I grew frustrated.

When it became clear that I would never surpass my peers at the rate I was going, I started exploring other avenues of creation. That is when I discovered "Les Twins".

The Start of Something



The Internationally famous Talented dance duo “Les Twins” inspired me to do many things but the biggest lesson I learned from watching them is that “*Entertainment*” can take many forms and can work in conjunction with each other. Using dance, Les Twins were able to captivate audiences and use it as a platform to promote their other content like music, films, fashion, etc.,

I wanted to be just like them with my sona’ KZ. Furry conventions have dance competitions not unsimilar to what Les Twins did. If I could be the star of the show, able to captivate audiences like they did, I could grow my brand.

5 Elements of Entertainment

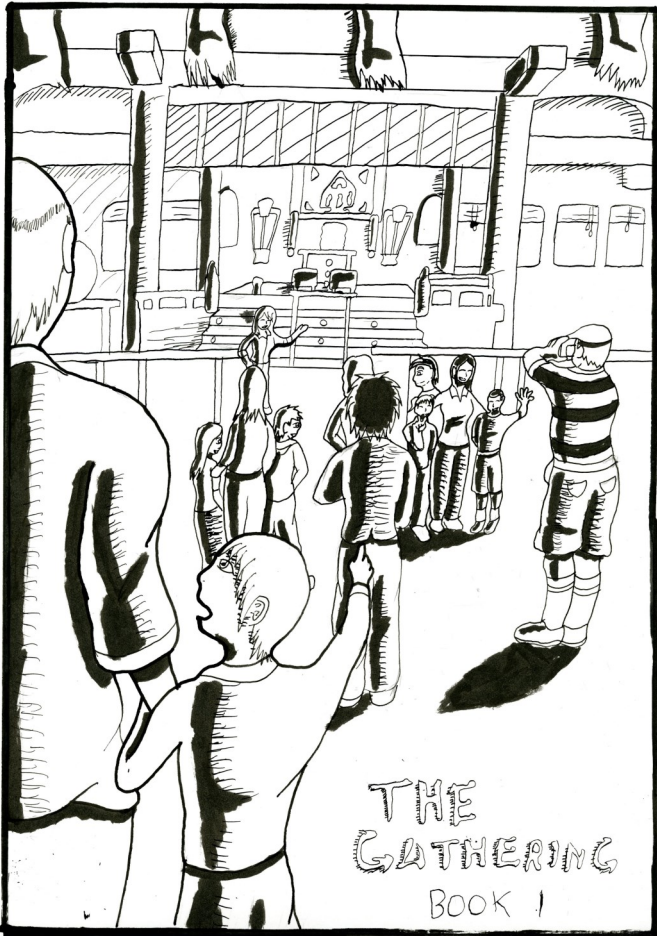
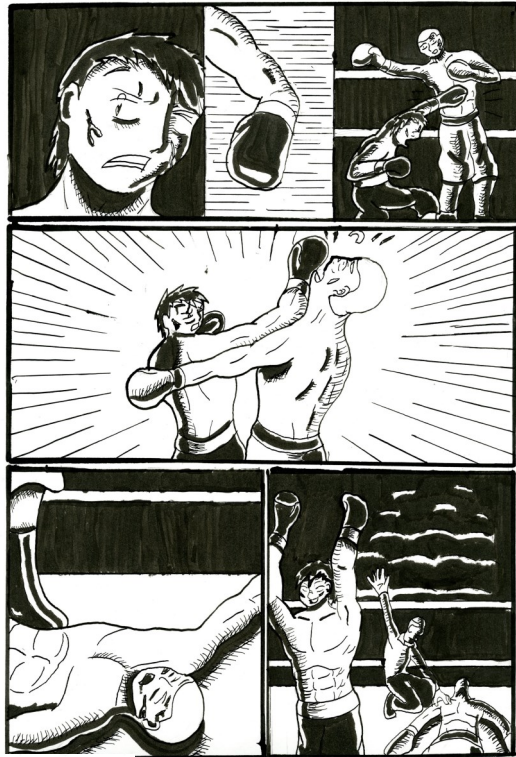


Inspired by Les Twins that fall of 2013, I redesigned KZ and crafted a theory called the **5 Elements of Entertainment**. The theory was that, to be a complete entertainer, one would need to master at least one aspect in each of the five elements of entertainment (different forms of media created to captivate audiences).

- ◇ Visual Media (Art, Film, Design, Animation, etc.,)
- ◇ Written Media (Stories, Novels, Poetry, Screenplays, etc.,)
- ◇ Performing Arts (Acting, Hosting, Concerts, etc.,)
- ◇ Music (Songwriting, Performing, Instrument playing)
- ◇ Dance (Any form of dance)

Under this new theory, my priorities slowly shifted at MCAD from making a single successful project to making a successful brand. My mindset broadened to start incorporating new ideas and experimenting. I started “Dance Club” at the school the next semester, took breakdancing and hip-hop lessons during the Summer, signed up for writing classes, and started really trying to build up my skillsets.





Still, my skillset by the end of my Sophomore year at MCAD was lackluster and I had a slew of issues with my classmates that resulted in me having to meet with the Dean of Student Affairs (twice) and a rulebook change.

Extremely frustrated by my academic experience, I had a new resolve — I would use every resource to study and practice the software available to us as MCAD students. I bought a stack of art tutorial books and spent my time at MCAD studying heavily, day and night. This would be the first time I developed hardcore study habits that would follow me to this very day.

It was around this time I began to explore web-comics and website creation. This led me to take the basic front-end web courses offered at MCAD and I loved what I learned.

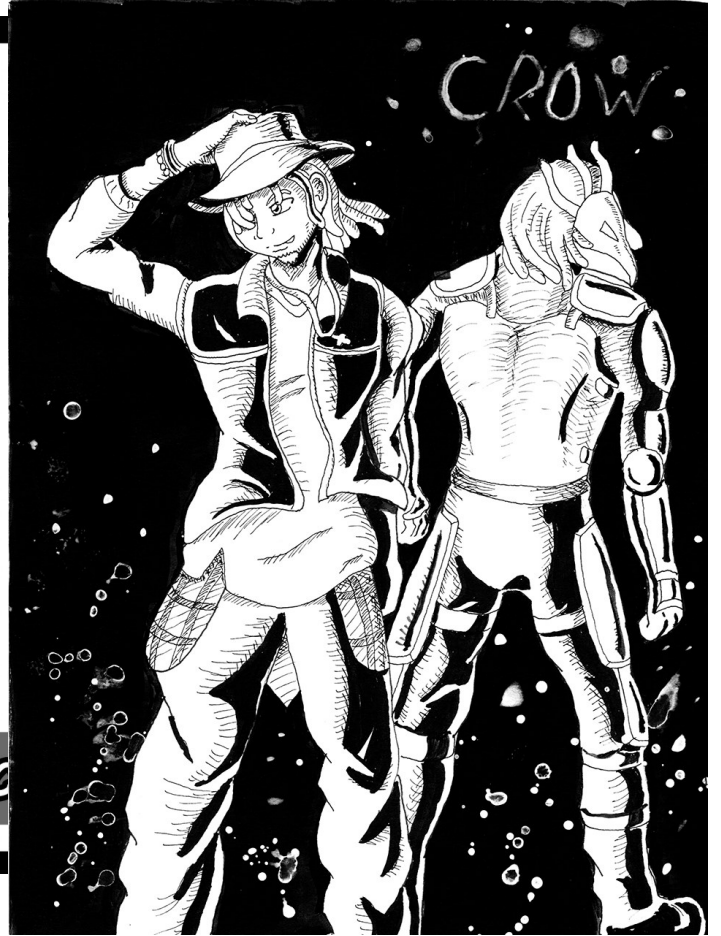
Improvement

The Flock



SOLOMON PETTY

GLITC



COBY 'QUICK' CARSON #1 CB
HEIGHT: 5'8" WEIGHT: 178 COLLEGE: VULPINE STATE UNIVERSITY



Amazing what can happen with consistent study and practice.

By the Fall of my Senior year I'd studied enough of the different software to be able to create 2D animations and I created a werelion animation that wound up getting 3 million views on Youtube over the next several years.

But I ran into a big issue. I had gathered a modest online following in the furry community under work that I couldn't possibly show to the general public. How could I possibly build a brand under Kzmaster if I couldn't even have kids safely google it? (**Note: It's completely safe now and has been for many years). The truth is I was at an identity crisis — too furry for the general public, not furry enough to actually want to do it as a brand. So I tried to switch up multiple times using different sonas, different brands. The idea is that one would be for furries, the other would be for general public, and both would be in favor of building a successful brand.



Graduation

I graduated MCAD with basic frontend web development skills and a solid artistic foundation and though, while solid, it definitely wasn't at the level I sought when initially attending the academy. Regardless, my sole mission upon graduation was to start my career by getting a job as a web developer and working on a webcomic during the evenings/nights and weekends — that webcomic was the original Zach Cooner (2017).

This is where things took a nosedive and any confidence I'd built up during the course of MCAD was crushed. In the Fall of 2017, I was confronted with the harsh reality/truth that my degree (*that I just went triple figures in debt with*) was worthless. I couldn't get a job that wasn't sales, warehouse labor—any job that could have been obtained without a degree.

Simultaneously, I made a grave error with my webcomic— I didn't properly plan it out. The workload was too great, the plot unfocused, the marketing non-existent; I was working myself silly for little payoff and that lasted through all of 2018. By the end of 2018 I fell into depression and burnout, a textbook recipe to kill any passion for an interest.



My table at Anime Iowa 2018.

Lost Passion

This was a period where I truly felt like the loudmouth getting their “comeuppance”. None of my dreams I had when initially heading to MCAD came true (not even close) and it felt like everything I did or created meant nothing. The Kzmaster brand was, quite literally, worthless, I wasn’t an amazing artist by any stretch of the imagination, and it felt like I wasted a colossal amount of time on the project. I had fallen out of practice with dance, never picked up music as a skillset, and lost my interest in writing and illustration.

I lost my passion for creating comics and I wasn’t interested in creating anymore unless I could find a way to make quality work at an efficient work rate. Saying I felt like a failure would be an understatement.

((**In hindsight, I understand now this was just the result of a combination of project failure + poor work/life balance + unrealistic expectations coming out of college. You don’t know what you don’t know, and I truly had no idea how to successfully and efficiently go about operating a weekly project like a 3 page a week webcomic. The project was supposed to be simple and about 65 pages but it ballooned out into a 190 page monster — so of course burnout was going to happen.))



Public Allies: Americorps

It wasn't until I joined Public Allies: Americorps in the Fall of 2018 that things started to get better as I was surrounded by community leaders who genuinely cared about my well being and wanted me to succeed in my dreams—and I got to use my skills to help others. [More about Americorps here.](#)



I did Americorps for 2 years and the leaders helped guide me on my goals for the future, one of which being that I wanted to go to grad school. Because of them, I was able to research and find a perfect fit that would be covered by the Americorps Service Grant — essentially, they helped me go to grad school for free.

Towards the end of 2019, my passion for creation had returned and I was going to try again to fulfill my dream of being a master of the five elements of entertainment under a new mascot.

King the Kreator



Inspired by Desmond O' Leary from Blacksad: Under the Skin, and Boardwalk Empire, King the Kreator was a sona' I created in Jan 2020 as the face of my new endeavor to help other creatives make money with their passions (basically a professional sona for sales, marketing, and small business development), with a 1950's swagger. I studied so very hard to try and live through this sona—book after book, seminar after seminar, business classes, e-course after e-course. I consulted with successful business contacts and had genuine interest from millionaires on this endeavor.

Going into Covid lockdown with King was unfortunate due to the fact that I had literally just graduated a business class and the mingle was to happen the day of the lockdown. Still, the period trapped in my home allowed me the opportunity to learn skillsets I wanted to learn at MCAD but never did, such as 3D and VR.

King the Kreator



This endeavor was truly something I threw my everything into and I was utterly convinced I was going to make my dream a reality by making others' dreams a reality.

I graduated from NDSU in 2021 and within 3 weeks, I got a job as a Software Engineer for my city's primary telecommunication company. Finally, 4 years after graduating MCAD, I had finally gotten the job I sought and was in a much better place mentally and skill wise.

Happy Ending?

Finally, at 26, I had exactly what most anyone who sets out to college would want. A good paying stable job in my field of study and a standard amount of free time. Yet, the more I learned about finance, the more disgruntled I became. I felt like I was going insane, all I had to do was show up to work, work the metaphorical 9 to 5, and go home to work on my own endeavor, and everything would work itself out, so why was I unhappy?

The reality of my situation was as simple as this...I wasn't ready. The Masters was Plan B, not Plan A - I felt like I could be so much more than what I was doing (not to imply that there's anything wrong with having a good paying stable job.) For anyone who didn't have the aspirations I did, this job was perfect. But for me, I only felt 'alive' once I clocked out for the day, a fate I was not ready to resign myself to without having gone for my dream at least once, and I truly felt as though I could obtain it before any great financial burden was felt.

My parents (understandably) looked at me like I was insane for doing so, but I resigned from my position 6 months after obtaining it. However, it wasn't long before another opportunity came my way when it came to working for Des Moines Area Community College as the Brother to Brother Coordinator. This part time position paid well enough and would allow me to use the skillsets I was learning and developing as King the Kreator.



Back to Dance



At the beginning of 2022, it was my New Years Resolution to finally return to my original breakdance teacher and help him achieve his dream of starting a legitimate dance company in the city. I was honored to give advisement and be apart of the formation of Des Moines Breakerz (Founded originally by Tammra Swartwood and Anthony San).

For the first time, dance wasn't something that I only did 2-3 times a year, but the vision of being like Les Twins was actually within grasp (of course, I would still need hundreds of hours of training, but now it was possible.)

Things were looking up in the beginning of 2022...until they weren't.

Back to Reality

Almost comically, I screwed my dream up by hopping on a podcast of my target audience in 2022, without any of my notes, trying to be like the financial guru's I had greatly studied from/under, without any of their presentation or work experience.

Needless to say, I bombed, and people were outraged. Turns out, talking about finance and poorly explaining things is a whole lot different than talking about something mundane and poorly explaining things. (Had I a chance to do it over, I would of kept things simple and explained everything in detail with my notes present.) The backlash I got was pretty much the worst case scenario and whatever reputation I had got thrown in the toilet.

I wish I could say this was just a little black mark on what would otherwise be a successful record but the reality of the situation is this devastated me and left me deeply jaded. I lost all confidence in anything I was doing (including my day job) and I developed social anxiety to the point of not being able to perform my duties.

I quit posting to social media or any art galleries I had and withdrew inward. I no longer had the confidence to do what I set out to do and I doubted everything I did. The only bright spot in this all was building with the dance company and teaching youth in a Summer Graphic Design program.



Starting Over Again...

It took almost two years to recover from that. By the end of the Summer of 2023 my job performance had deteriorated so much that my only real option was to resign or be fired. Thankfully, my brother gave me a lead on a custodial position at the local school district, and though the job is disgusting (and below the expectation of someone with a Masters in Software Engineering) it's allowed me everything I need to get back on my feet and to learn the skills I needed to get back to the original dream of being a full-time creator/master of the five elements.

Which carries us into October of 2023 when Maverick was created. At this point, I knew fully what I wanted—a professional platform with a mascot I could launch creations off of. One of the perks of withdrawing inward was understanding and accepting my true interests.

The reality of the situation is I'm a Tony Hawk's Pro Skater kid. I grew up during its golden age 1999-2007. I was around for the rise of pop punk, ska-punk, etc., I watched Digimon, Pokemon, DBZ, Yu-Gi-Oh, Naruto (the list goes on), I'm far from the stereotype (or box) of what a 'black male' is and, back then, you were made fun of for liking anything outside what was considered 'the norm'. So I had a lot of repressed interests that I'd never pursued out of fear and, at this point in my life, I understood it was now or never.





Combining my love of Digimon with the Youth Culture era of the early 00's, I was able to create a character that would incorporate my skills and interests — something that would appeal to my target audience with my projects (teens and kids). With this sona', I want to do all the things I was too afraid to do growing up, performing, dancing, singing, skating, etc., and show others it's perfectly fine to just be yourself.

What's Coming?

What's coming?

This can be boiled down to the simple terms for this endeavor: **Mission, Vision, and Values.**

My Mission

As a dedicated creator, my mission isn't simply content production (Been there, done that, didn't take.) I aspire to curate an immersive experience where originality thrives, quality resonates, and consistency is something the viewer can rely on. By weaving captivating narratives, fostering genuine connections with supporters, and embracing the flow of creativity, I aim to leave good memories on the hearts and minds of my audience.

My Vision

The vision under Maverick is to be a popular and well regarded creative platform and a source of inspiration to aspiring creatives looking to pursue a career with their passion. I want to push the boundaries of what's possible through creativity and grit and to facilitate the next generation of creators with my work.

Values

Respect above all: I will never put profit over people, I will never lie to my supporters, I will never disrespect those who show respect to me.

Honor: I will never intentionally bring dishonor to myself, my family, or my supporters.

Inspire, not tear down: The purpose of Maverick is to uplift those around him who want to be, not to tear others down.

What's Coming?

What's coming?



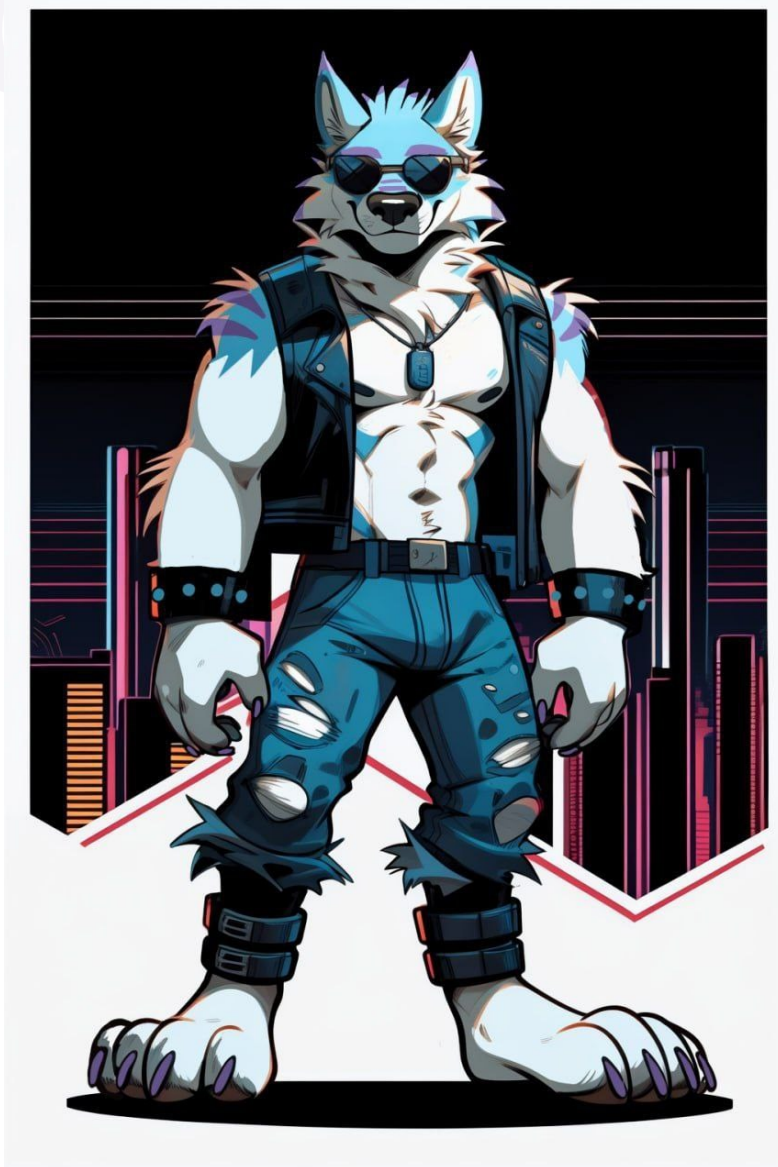
My first order of business will be to redo Zach Cooner and do it correctly this time by using what I've learned throughout the years to create a quality project people will enjoy. Animations will be created for Youtube and the project will be released in the form of a visual novel series via the main site or Steam.

My second order of business is to get my online text-based RPG game the United Furry Fighting Championship up and going. This has been something I've wanted to finish for a long time but, as discussed earlier, different life events got in the way.

There's different sorts of projects on the list but, for now, I'm only focusing on these two and doing so one at a time.



Conclusion



There's been a lot of highs and lows with this journey towards my dream but, in a way, those victories and defeats were super necessary to get me where I am now and to be in this fortunate position in my life to start this creative platform. Without those experiences, Maverick wouldn't exist and I wouldn't have the skillsets I do now.

It is an honor to be able to create content others are interested in and I value each and every one who shares their time with me or my work. I'm looking forward to what the future brings, and I hope you'll be along for the ride.



Larry (Left) Me (Middle) Laurent (Right)

Me finally meeting Les Twins at the Sept 2023 Kansas City Workshop

Larry eviscerating me in a battle: [Larry - Kung Fu Style - Kansas City Afterparty \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)