

'Letting the brush work its magic'

Self-taught painter continues family legacy, creates artistic future

WORDS: **LEAH R. SINGER**
PHOTOGRAPHY: **AUSTEN LEAKE**

Bryan Bromstrup's career as an artist did not start in a traditional way. He did not attend art school, nor did he train in his craft since childhood. His foray into painting began as part of a family tradition, and after watching a few episodes of Bob Ross' "Joy of Painting," five years and 115 pieces later, the rest is history.

Bromstrup admits the painting gene is, quite literally, in his blood. His great grandmother was an artist, and later taught his mother to paint. Additionally, his grandfather took up oil painting after retirement.

Yet just because painting is the "family business," Bromstrup did not anticipate he would follow suit. His journey began in December 2012 when his mother encouraged him to try his hand at painting.

"She gave me some art supplies, which sat in the corner of a room for about a month because I was too scared to try it," Bromstrup said. "Then one day I watched a



Bryan Bromstrup paints a wide variety of subjects ranging from landscapes to animals to pop-culture related pieces.



thought, 'I can do this.' So I got out a canvas and started painting."

Today Bromstrup typically paints a few pieces each month. He enjoys the peacefulness in the painting process, and the ability to get lost in the work.

"Sometimes I get up and start painting early in the morning and lose all track of time," Bromstrup said. "The next thing I know, it's 2 a.m., the painting is done and there's nobody around."

When he is not painting, Bromstrup can be found working as director of administrative services at Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology. Originally from a the Indianapolis suburb of Beech Grove, he and his family moved to Terre Haute in 2015.

Inspiration from the everyday

While painting has been a fairly new endeavor for Bromstrup, he admits to always having an artistic point of view. He enjoys music, plays guitar (also self taught) and photography.

"I paint what I enjoy in life," he said. "It might be from pop culture or from observing interesting things around me. It has come from music, television, movies, and of course anything that catches my eye."

An example of his pop culture painting was a piece of art that was inspired by the "Wizard of Oz" and Pink Floyd. The piece features the main Oz characters walking down the yellow brick road with the "The Dark Side of the Moon" triangle symbol hanging above them in Emerald City. James Bond movies have also inspired his designs. Bromstrup is never at a loss for inspiration, and continually adds notes and photographs to his "future paintings" idea folder.

Bryan Bromstrup typically paints in his basement studio while listening to music.



ago, but has already produced a large amount of work.

He was recently inspired to finish a painting his late grandfather started. "I found one of my grandfather's paintings that was draped on an easel, but it wasn't finished," Bromstrup said. "I found the original inspiration for the art and finished the painting for him." He then gave the collaborative work to his grandfather at this retirement home before he passed away.

Painting beyond Indiana

For the first year of Bromstrup's painting, his work was mainly kept on display at home, and for family and friends. In the beginning of 2014, however, he made a goal to expand the reach of his art.

Early in his painting years, he started following the Creative Action Network (CAN), a community of artists and advocates who run crowd-sourced campaigns around causes. CAN posted a call for submissions as part of a project to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the National Parks Association.

"I have always loved traveling and specifically visiting the National Parks," he said. "While reading National Parks Magazine, I came across an article for the 'See America Poster Project' and immediately wanted to be involved."

Bromstrup submitted his painting of the



Badlands National Park in South Dakota. In May 2017, as part of the "See America" National Parks project, CAN partnered with Yankee Candle

Company to provide the artwork for a limited-edition set of candles. His Badlands art was accepted and is now depicted as art on a Yankee

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Candle.

He was also featured as artist number 31 in another CAN poster collection entitled "What Makes America Great." His piece, entitled "Bravery - Makes America Great," was archived in the Library of Congress' Poster Collection this year.

For the 100th running of the Indianapolis 500 in May of 2016, Bromstrup was lucky enough to have a signature piece recognized in an exhibit called "Fast Forward, Look Back: Celebrating the Indianapolis 500 Through Art" at the Stutz Art Gallery in Indianapolis.

Bromstrup also began displaying his art locally in Terre Haute. His pieces are featured at the Arts Illiana gallery, where he also serves on the board of directors. He was hired by Sycamore Engineering to design the art for their 6-foot Coke bottle sculpture. This will be displayed

Bryan Bromstrup's painting of the Badlands National Park was featured on a label for a Yankee Candle.

along with 24 other sculptures throughout Terre Haute in the spring.

What the future holds

While many artists chose to continue their creative paths in the area in which they've always practiced, Bromstrup sees a new way to be artistic in today's changing world of technology. He is exploring apps and digital platforms to enhance his work, in a process he calls "awesomizing" art. This may include scanning a photo of his oil painting into a phone app and adding text and shading to give it an entirely new look.

While it's been several years since he first put

paint to canvas, Bromstrup has no intention of slowing down his art. "I've learned something new from every painting I have ever done," he said. "As I get older, I find the artist in me has come to the forefront, expanding the simple things I always did into pieces of art. In the real world, I am very process- and detail-oriented. So when it comes to being creative, I look beyond the how to do it and enjoy the process of just letting the brush work its magic."

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