

Success in art can't be guaranteed every time

This is another in a series of lessons on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for eight years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 18774 Middlebelt, Livonia. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 2333 Farmington Road, Farmington MI 48024.



Artifacts

You can actually see the carpeting. I know about how much I can expect when it comes to clean up time. I wouldn't say "clean up your room." These rooms couldn't really be cleaned unless you could drive a road grader through them.

WHEN I want them to work on their rooms, I say, "Just try to find the floor, guys." Their excuses are classics. For example: "Oh sure Dad, but you know that class that I'm doing real good for? Well we are having a test tomorrow and I would love to study for it today." Or, "Sure Dad, but . . . I'm reading this really interesting chapter in the Bible where St. Paul is talking about patience." Adam's excuses are not yet as creative, he just asks, "Can I wait until after Sesame Street is over?" I am sure, however, he knows that Sesame Street runs for about six hours.

"Like father like son" they say. I have an excuse or two up my sleeve also. One main goal of the Artifacts column is to answer questions from readers, and believe me there are plen-

ty of them. I'm going to answer every one, but . . . I also want to write about new products and the psychology of the artist. Now do you see where my boys get their great excuses from? So without any more excuses, I promise, I will begin answering questions every week.

Every once in a while someone will ask a question that I could write a book on.

Steve asks: "Do you ever get to the place in your artwork where you are sure every work will be a success?"

I am happy to say "No" I haven't reached that point and I hope I never will. If I reached that point my art would become a science. A science has a predictable outcome. Art is wonderfully unpredictable. Art is an expression of the spirit, mind and body of the individual. Because art is an individual expression altered by the spirit, mind and body, it is subject to error. Any error in the work can however, be corrected.

FOR EXAMPLE, the spirit could inspire the mind to express a feeling. Now that expression in the artwork could be plagued with errors, but failure only comes about when the work is abandoned. Success or failure is a decision which only the artist can make.

Since any errors can be corrected by the artist or even by the artist's teacher, then every work of art has the potential of being successful. And indeed the possibilities of failure seem to sharpen the skills of the artist and therefore increase the odds for a successful work of art.

Probably the closest art form to a science would be craft. Usually it is a guaranteed success, but in my opinion falls short of a work of art. Several weeks ago I was flicking through the channels on the television and one station showed a woman teaching how to paint roses. She said, "All you need is the No. 2 rose pencil brush. You simply dip it in pink paint then set the brush on your canvas and when you lift it off the canvas flick it to the right. Now just repeat this many times rotating the canvas in a circle and you have a beautiful rose." And it was a beautiful rose! But it was a crafty approach and neglected the individual structure of each petal which lends to the total beauty of the rose.

I love to look close at the simple things in nature because there will undoubtedly be an inner complexity of which I was not aware. Now don't misunderstand me. I love crafts. As a

break from art work I enjoy the guaranteed success rate of crafts. Crafts have been the stepping stone for many who later succeed in art. So don't be frustrated by your mental hills and valleys when creating a work of art.

Tom asks, "We want to put a dormer on our home but before we do the work we would like to see what it might look like. The builders are no help and the architects are too expensive. Where do we go for help?"

MOST STUDENTS of art can render a convincing looking elevation of a house. My students have a minimum fee of \$25. Simply supply them or whoever with some photos of the existing house and a description or rough sketch of what the dormer would look like. Before undertaking a several thousand dollar addition, you are smart to invest a few dollars to see what you are getting into.

Elizabeth asks, "I am writing for advice about my son. He hasn't had a job since he quit college several years ago. He majored in art for three years. What can he do with his training? Can you offer him a job?"

A: Since we have over 200 art stu-

dents when it comes time that we need help or artistic services we look first to our students for employment or commissions. But I do have some advice for your son. The door of opportunity has many shapes and sizes. Sometimes it is so big that you are afraid to walk through it. Sometimes, the door is so small you have to crawl through it. The real problem with opportunity is that it is not often recognized.

Gordon was in the store this week. When I asked him how school was going, he beamed with joy. "Dave" he said, "I just got a full-time job as an artist." Now Gordon has taken one semester in art school and had no business applying for a job with one of the nation's biggest companies. How did he think he could ever beat out all those applicants with degrees in art? Gordon got the job because he presented the best portfolio.

Elizabeth, your son has no less limitations than Gordon. So encourage him to build the best portfolio he can. One of my earlier Artifacts had an outline for possible entries for a good portfolio. So when the opportunity arises and he recognizes it, he will be somewhat prepared.

By David Messing
special writer

Probably the poorest investment of my married life was new carpeting for my boys' bedrooms.

The new carpeting is now hiding under He-man action figures, stuffed animals, stereos, weights and last week's sweatshirts! Adam's bedroom looks like a Fisher-Price warehouse. Kevin's bedroom is so cluttered that this year we hid his Christmas gifts in his room under last year's computer toys. But in Scott's room I must admit there are patchy clearings here and there where

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