

I'd like to share what a true honor it is for me to be an art student of Andrea Strongwater

Looking back on it, it was incredibly fortuitous I met Andrea just at the start of the pandemic. Coincidentally, we met on a college list serv, as Andrea discussed her art. I impulsively reached out to her see about setting up private online art classes. My adult daughter, who is also a physician, joins us as well for lessons. So here you have it, 3 busy professionals, in 3 different cities, all with incredibly out of sync schedules, making what seemed the impossible, very possible.

I have never taken art classes before, but every single week, without fail, since the pandemic unleashed unforgiving fury, my daughter and I have met online for art lessons with Andrea. This hour is, without question, the highlight of my week. I cherish my time learning from Andrea. We have all been horribly shaken and scared by the pandemic, every one of us has experienced loss in our own way. Creating art has been the best medicine for me and truly the silver lining in all this tragedy.

Even though I am a doctor, and pride myself on having certain knowledge and potential, learning art from Andrea has nonetheless burst wide open an entirely new vista of understanding, challenge, skill set and aesthetics for me. We started out with sketching and shading, something I had never done before. I learned about form, composition and technique. We next moved on to watercolors and color, now have progressed to gouache. I also love to experiment with oil pastel sticks in my work. Just this week, I am painting a wee rabbit and baby lion, to accompany a story I am writing. Maybe one day I

will finally achieve my lifelong goal of writing and illustrating a children's story! Every single week, I learn remarkable pearls of wisdom from Andrea. She is a never ending font of knowledge and artistry, inspiration, and kindness. I can't imagine a kinder, more patient teacher, and so vivacious and full of life. Andrea is a true joy for me to learn from.

Andrea has opened my world in ways I could never possibly have imagined. Whereas the old me only saw a single shade or two in the grass and flowers, now I see rich sumptuous swirls of pink, red, violet, blue, yellow, green, all the colors in the rainbow. I see light and dark, I see shapes, I see emotion and meaning. Why is this important to me? Because this all connects me to my world and to others, especially during this isolation. For me, art provides comfort, a special feeling of accomplishment and purpose, creativity and inspiration, which is all the more important to me during this lock-down. In the solitude of the pandemic, I never feel alone when I can grab my cat and paint. I also love idly painting with my daughter online, while we have conversations. Art has opened new ways for my daughter and I to connect and learn together. Plus, the art materials are so incredibly beautiful, I am overjoyed to work with my supplies, and decorate a small, very special and personal corner to work at home.

I am perpetually in awe of Andrea's remarkable eye, her exceptional artistry and gift to engage as a teacher. I can't sing enough wonderful praise about Andrea. She exudes genuine kindness, warmth, and passion for art and creativity, and I now consider her a dear friend as well.

With Andrea as my teacher, I am developing art skills I never knew I had. Andrea has shown me to to create and express myself in ways I never have before. I am 59 years old, and for me to embark on this daunting journey of learning art, well, taking art lessons with Andrea has been incredibly personally fulfilling, and easily one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Karen Prowda

November 22, 2020