

PG LOCAL ARTIST INTERVIEW

Kate Jorgensen

This month, we speak with Kate Jorgensen, a member of the local fine arts community. Kate was awarded the 2024 Pleasant Grove High School Sterling Scholar achievement for Fine Arts, a notable accomplishment that highlights her pursuit of excellence in the arts.

Learn more about Kate's growth in the arts, how she overcame challenges that developed passion for her work, and some of her big accomplishments in education.

Where are you from, Kate?

I am from Pleasant Grove, Utah. We've been here for a long time. My 4th great grandpa, Henson Walker, was the first mayor of Pleasant Grove and our family is still here.

What are some of your earliest memories of the arts?

I have always loved drawing. I would color on the walls with crayons, "decorate" my three older sisters' homework, and cover every square inch of the kitchen with my art supplies. I made many things, from pretend restaurant menus, house plans, to designing fashion magazines. I especially loved to write and illustrate children's books. In 2nd grade, I created a book called "*A Surprise from Ellie the Elephant*", which won the State Inspirations Contest! These early memories sparked my passion for creating art.

What are your preferred art mediums?

I am experienced with all different forms of media, but I specialize in colored pencil, watercolor, charcoal, and digital drawing. Most of my artwork is cartooning, realism, and surrealism. I love creating colorful pieces with lots of details.



What have you taken as a part of your art education?

I am currently a Senior at Pleasant Grove High School, and I'm graduating this month! I've been enrolled in an art class every semester since junior high. Although I enjoy taking art classes in a school setting, nothing beats the home studio. For now, my studio is just our kitchen counter; but when I draw, I pretend as if I am an "esteemed professional artist in a grand art studio."

I am currently taking AP Art, where I am making 15 art pieces based on the question: "How can I tell my story through historic ways of storytelling?" For each piece of art, I draw a different type of storytelling. Each of the art pieces in the series demonstrates a literal or symbolic version of me, with details about my personal or family life. For example, I created Egyptian hieroglyphs to demonstrate oral storytelling, and I created the "American Dream", which is my favorite piece in the collection, to demonstrate the art of cinema.

You were chosen as the Sterling Scholar winner this year! Can you tell us what that was like?

Every school in Utah picks 14 high school Seniors to be Sterling Scholars, which are awards across 14 fourteen different subjects. These Sterling Scholar winners then compete against other high schools in the state for scholarship opportunities.

I was awarded the Visual Arts Sterling Scholar for Pleasant Grove High School, which is such an honor for me. Throughout the competition, I was judged for my artwork, category expertise, and experience with art on a number of levels. There is a lot of emphasis on academics, leadership, and community service as well.

I loved creating my portfolio for the Sterling Scholar competition. Through the experience, I made it to the regional level, and I really enjoyed sharing my portfolio and talking about art with art professors from various Universities. Being a Sterling Scholar helped me realize that I can follow my passion, achieve my dreams and use my talents in my career, in leadership and in service to others.

What has been the most memorable experience in working in the arts?

Last year, I had the opportunity to help paint the high school's school mural! The comic book illustrator Dimi Macheras flew in from Seattle, Washington with the objective of helping us as art students create a stunning 16'x4.5' mural in a single month.

Dimi has created some highly detailed murals containing the past and present stories of high school students, and she was a great fit for our local project. Our mural, "The Hall of Heroes," was inspired by the Norse idea of Valhalla - very fitting for the Pleasant Grove Vikings. In the mural, the hero "students" live within the school, and will soon march out of its gates into the "battle" world. There's a lot of imagery and symbolism in the final mural that we created.



While the mural and timelines were a bit stressful, I gained valuable experience in working on this project with our mentor and fellow students. I learned how to match a team's art style (several artists with unique styles and experiences), draw large scale, and paint vertically from weird angles, and I loved collaborating with amazing artists. Now I can proudly walk down the main hall of the school, and say "I did that!"

What are some of the works that you are involved in now?

I tend to stay pretty busy with various projects. I currently assist the art classes at the local studio, US and ART. I have also assisted with art camps at PG Rec Center for the last couple summers.

This year, I rebooted the Art Club at Pleasant Grove High School, where I am the acting Art Club President. I am also very involved in my AP Art courses through school.

I recently went to France for an Art history tour, which was very insightful. This year I won 2nd place at the State Reflections contest for art, and I have been learning to work with resin art to improve my skills in different mediums. It's been a busy year, to say the least!

You are working with the local art studio US and ART – what is that like?

US and ART such a great part of our local community. There are a wide variety of classes that are offered that help both youth and adults to improve their skills and interests in the arts.

Each course semester has a different theme, which is helpful to keep the content varied and interesting. The owner, Emily Hammerstad, is so creative and passionate about art.

I currently help teach the 9-11 year old kids, and the 12-17 year old youth. I also help with the painting-themed birthday parties and day camps.



Something that I appreciate most about my experience with the art studio is how much I have learned from becoming a teacher and using my own creativity to connect with the students. My favorite part of the job is helping with art galas at the end of the semester, which showcase the student's art to the community. US and ART is a great learning environment, and I highly recommend it for anyone interested in devoting more time and interest in developing their art skills.

How does art influence your own personal life perspectives?

I have always loved art, but it didn't become a true passion of mine until after I came to hate it. At one point, I had experienced some discouraging obstacles, which led to me wanting to quit art for good. Some of my personal struggles were impacting my creativity and motivation to make art, which was very difficult for me. If it weren't for a very special art teacher that helped to rekindle my love for the arts, I would have probably never pursued my interests further.

Through my experiences, I have developed a passion for the arts. It's an outlet that allows me to be creative. But most importantly, it gave me the ability to find beauty in all aspects of life, and it helps me to communicate my feelings.

I am now a "glass half-full" person, which has really come from overcoming my obstacles. It really was a mental shift for me to be able to control my thoughts and feelings, where art can become a distraction from challenges, rather than impacted by challenges. I use art as a way to channel my circumstances into something that I can express visually, and it often helps give me hope. This year, for my AP Art sustained investigation, I have used some of my most difficult experiences to create colorful, positive artwork to show that life often works out in the end.



How do you plan to use your talents in art moving forward?

I have been accepted to BYU next year! My plan is to major in Art Education; I had an inspiring art teacher in seventh grade (Mrs Lines) who helped me change my perspective and develop passion for my interests. Without her, I wouldn't have continued art, and I hope to become just as much of an inspiration to growing artists as she was to me. I hope to help students keep their childlike spark and passion so that they can express their creativity throughout their entire lives.

Art has been more than a hobby for me. In the years ahead, I see myself decorating my child's birthday cake, rearranging furniture, and creating murals within my future home. I see art as a daily part of my life. I think I will be content in my older years, knowing that I've followed my passion. For me, art will always be one of the essential components to living a happy life!