



Jerrod Partridge

From making his own paper to capturing the essence of a subject, Jerrod Partridge finds joy in the process of creating.

STORY BY AMANDA WELLS | PHOTOS BY RON BLAYLOCK

With soothing sounds drifting from his radio and vigorous waves of a piece of charcoal, Jerrod Partridge seems to scribble in his humble home studio. Paintings of various landscapes, self portraits, and the random facial feature line the walls. Right before my eyes, the depth of his talent becomes evident as the jumbled lines quickly begin to mimic the face I see in the mirror each morning. Just a sketch – a mere glimpse of the detailed portraits he meticulously creates – I'm blown away.

Partridge grew up in Mobile, Alabama before moving to Forest, Mississippi during high school. After graduation, he continued on to Mississippi College, where he took his very first art class. "I always enjoyed drawing growing up, but it was never really nurtured," says Partridge. "I had never had any formal training until college. I was fascinated with the human figure and had been really interested in medical illustrations." He planned on majoring in Biology and Art, but after taking his first art class, he realized he was meant for art and art alone.

During his time at MC, Partridge met artist Bob Pennebaker of Star, who became his mentor and further spurred his love of recreating the human face and figure. "I began setting up in the mall and doing caricatures with him," says Partridge. "He was very encouraging and really helped me with the fine arts side and helped me understand how to view the human figure objectively. Because we are so familiar with the face, it's often one of the hardest things to draw."





"I never knew exactly what it meant to be a professional artist," he says. "I just knew that some sort of art was what I was supposed to do." Partridge graduated from MC with a degree in art with an emphasis in graphic design. Following college, he worked in graphic design for a non-profit and an architectural firm. With the rawness of drawing and painting tugging at his heartstrings, he and his wife Jessie moved to New York City to pursue his master's degree in painting at the New York Academy of Art.

After moving back to the metro area, Partridge delved back into the world of graphic design before going to work as an artist for Pearl River Glass Studio. Just last year, when the opportunity to become a full-time painter presented itself, Partridge returned to his first love of painting and dove headfirst into the world of full-time art. "I had always been a little hesitant to paint full time because I loved it so much," says Partridge. "I was nervous that if I had to do it for a living that I wouldn't enjoy it as much, but then I realized that this would be a great opportunity to see how far I can go with it and to really master my craft."

Rather quickly, portrait commissions began to line up and Partridge began teaching figure drawing classes to a bevy of other artists, both amateur and the well known. In addition to his portrait commissions – including that of Millsaps' most recent past president Frances Lucas – Partridge allows his creative side to run wild with what he describes as his "narrative" work, depicting scenes from his everyday life. "The narrative work allows me to paint a much more broad subject matter," he says.

Adding even more to Partridge's broad spectrum is the fact that he often makes his own paper on which he paints. When a friend approached him about doing some work for an environmentally friendly art fair, he began trying to think of ways to incorporate more green methods into his work. After watching a string of video clips online, he set up a blow up swimming pool and constructed a mesh frame and taught himself to recycle his own paper. "I love



the way it turned out," he says. "I think it adds even more to the character of the work. You can really see the different tones and textures."

Jerrod has also taken to the blogging world as author of the Jackson Art Seen blog, which features art shows around the metro area and is co-creator of the Sketchbook Conversation blog, which records visual conversations between artists by way of physical sketchbooks.

From parents wanting to capture the innocence of their little ones to adults hoping to freeze in time the image of their aging parents, people have flocked to Partridge. His realistic, yet ethereal



depictions speak volumes and somehow seem to peer straight into the soul of his subjects. Taking the leap into mastering his craft full time has proven positive for this gifted artist. Here, he is comfortable, barefoot in front of his easel, with the giggles of his kids, Ren, 4, and Mae, 2, in the next room. Doing what he loves – and doing it well. - MC



For more information on Jerrod Partridge, visit www.jerroddpartridge.com. Visit his blogs at www.jxnartseen.blogspot.com and www.sketchbookconversation.blogspot.com.