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FACES IN THE CROWD

Missouri City artist goes through metamorphosis

Tough times help to reawaken woman's creativity

By **CYNTHIA COLEMAN FRANKLIN**
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Her innate ability to create detailed works of art lay dormant for decades until Kathy Bigham Love went through a metamorphosis, picked up her pencils and began drawing again.

Love, 41, who's won numerous awards, said she's been an artist all of her life, yet she's never taken a drawing class.

"When I was in the fifth grade I was drawing pictures of my classmates and teachers, and they told me I was pretty good at it," Love said.

Born in Austin, Love studied computer science at Southwest Texas in San Marcos. She also attended Austin Community College and North Lake Community College in Dallas before dropping out. Love married, had two sons, and for seven years ran her own advertising specialties business.

In 2001, while watching an episode of *ER*, Love said she pulled out a snapshot she'd taken of her friend's daughter.

"My friend's picture kept nagging at me; this was inspirational," Love said. "I said, 'Let me pray for God to guide me.' I pulled out my art pad, I got brave enough to draw, (and) I started drawing."

By the end of the episode, Love had completed the portrait.

Jacqueline Holland has been Love's neighbor and friend for six years. As residents of Lakes of Brightwater, they wait for their children together at the same bus stop.

One day, while waiting at the bus stop, Love held the portrait close to her, afraid to show her completed work to her friend.

"I told her, 'If you don't want it, you can take it in the house and throw it away,' " said Love, who gave her friend the portrait.

Holland said she burst into tears when she saw it, and said Love captured her daughter better than any other photographer.

"I don't know if she is aware," Holland said. "I have my 3-year-old daughter staring at me forever."

Holland said a few years ago she learned of Love's interest in art by accident.

"We used to sort of sit around and discuss what we use to do before we got married," Holland said.

<http://www.chron.com/cs/CDA/printstory.mpl/thisweek/zone17/news/3392492>

RESOURCES

KATHY BIGHAM LOVE

• **Age:** 41

• **Occupation:** Artist

• **Community connection:** She has a studio and teaches art at Artist's Alliance Studio School, 11285 Southwest Freeway

• **More:** Visit www.ArtClasses4U.com

She told Love she was in radio; Love, in turn, told Holland she used to do art."

"I had no idea, I was absolutely floored by it," Holland said. "I told her, 'If I could do this, I would sit on the street corner and show it.' "

Love said her family has a history of mental illness, and in 2003 she suffered a bout of depression. She said her 17-year marriage was ending and she became burned out on her job.

She took six months off at the recommendation of her doctor.

She said Holland encouraged her to pursue a career in art. Love rented a studio so she could get away and work.

"It was during that time that my artwork really took off," Love said.

She has business cards but no elaborate marketing plan, and so far, all of her work has come from referrals.

Love is raking in awards for her pencil and charcoal portraits. Last fall she came in first and second in the Conroe Art League Juried Show, and she won Best of Show, and second place for another drawing at the Houston Art Society Juried Show. Love said she won Best Semi-professional and First Honorable Mention at the Sugar Land Area Artists Winter Open Show.

"Once I rented the studio, I needed some income, so I started teaching art classes," Love said.

Those classes led to her opening her own school, Artist's Alliance Studio School, located on the Southwest Freeway. Love said she took a chance opening the school and her business is struggling, but she's doing pretty good.

Love teaches adults and children. Her curriculum consist of techniques that utilize the right side of the brain.

"(With the left side), we're taught to use it from day one, to identify things; we think linearly," Love said. "We have developed the linear side of our brain, and not much in the creative side.

"In my class, you are forced to use the right side of your brain."

She said anybody can learn to draw — even children with behavior problems.

"Some of the students with behavior problems settled down once they saw what they were able to accomplish," Love said.

She said they really became focused.

Love said she wants to exhibit her art more, but her primary focus is teaching.

"Coming from my own insecurities of being self-taught (and) not finishing college, I find that there are so many people out there that are the same way," Love said.

She said she feels 'like a proud mama' when she instills confidence in her students.

"I feel truly blessed," Love said. "I am going through a metamorphosis; it allows me to do this God-given gift."