

Andrea J Smith



Education

My first art related studies began in my small home town of Mildura in the northwestern tip of Victoria, Australia. Whilst in my fourth and fifth year of high school I took night classes in photography and ceramics. After graduating high school with predominantly art electives, I enrolled at Melbourne University and moved to the city. I graduated in 1982 with a Bachelor of Education (Art and Crafts), majoring in ceramics with a sub-major in photography. I was tempted to paint, but I thought it was too difficult. I didn't seem to have what it took.

Greener Pastures

After University I worked in Melbourne for a couple of years, saving my money for that Australian rite of passage – the year-long European back-packing expedition. That was eighteen years ago.

I have had an enormous variety of jobs over this period of time: as a barmaid in a Knightsbridge pub in London; as a nanny and a factory worker in Munich, Germany; and a furniture restorer, and English teacher in Florence, Italy. All of these jobs were primarily winter jobs as embracing the "walkabout" spirit, I spent most of the warmer months traveling on my Honda 50cc motorbike. Hannibal, as he eventually became known, was purchased hastily but cheaply in South London. We traveled across to France and south to the Riviera and into Italy, and continued through Switzerland and Germany just in time for winter. The next summer we toured Luxembourg and Belgium, crossed back over to England, then headed north as far as the furthestmost tip of Scotland. We then traveled clockwise around the entire coast of Ireland where Hannibal subsequently died in Dublin due to a shortage of motor oil.

Thereafter, I flew to Munich to work and save some money, bought another Honda motorbike (this time a 200cc) and headed for Florence. This new bike wasn't around long enough to be affectionately named, as instead I fell in love with Florence, and stayed for the next 11 years.

Career

In Florence I had heard about a painting school that interested me. The standards were high, the students seemed to get good results and the curriculum was structured. It was just what I was looking for. I enrolled at The Florence Academy of Art and after the first year was offered a scholarship as an instructor to the Beginning Drawing students, teaching them exactly what I had just learned. I continued to teach

drawing and study the painting programme until I officially finished the course in 1997. I chose to remain at the school for five more years, teaching in exchange for a private studio, access to the models and a small salary. During this time the school grew from 14 students to over 100.

In 1999 I won first prize in the A.M.E. Bale Art Award, an Australian travel grant that gave its recipients the opportunity to visit European museums. I chose Paris, London and the south of France -this time in a campervan!. In 2001 I came to America to visit the museums in New York, and to meet some of the highly respected New York painters, names I had heard mentioned in Florence. My work was accepted into the prestigious Forum Gallery, and once again, it all seemed to be happening– so I stayed for a further seven years.

Meanwhile, The Florence Academy of Art was beginning to make a very good name for itself internationally, and many art students in New York began asking me about its teaching method*. Subsequently, I opened a school in 2003 with friend and colleague, Judy Kudlow, named "The Harlem Studio of Art". The core curriculum is my version of the Florence Academy programme, and the studio resembles a nineteenth century French atelier rather than a traditional school. Space is limited and we reached our capacity of 11 students in 2006. In 2005 I introduced an annual July still life painting workshop programme. In September 2007, due to student demand, a two week portrait painting workshop was added.

I also taught an adaptation of my Harlem Studio course at New York's foremost figurative postgraduate institution, The New York Academy of Art, from 2005-7. In 2003 I gave a public lecture on the "Cours De Dessin" at the Dahesh Museum on Madison Avenue in conjunction with an exhibition held there.

Future Direction

In Autumn of 2008, I returned to Italy to paint and live with my dog Frank.

Please return to my website for updates on exhibition openings and public events. I hope to see you in Rome!

***"Cours De Dessin"**

Charles Bargue's Drawing Course.

For more information please refer to Gerald M. Ackerman's book, "Charles Bargue with the collaboration of Jean-Léon Gérôme", ARC Edition, 2003.

www.andreajsmith.com
enquiries@andreajsmith.com

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