

The Creative Mind and Talent of Jonathan A. Riley



My career in art began at a very young age. As a young boy I often accompanied my father on military bases and drew the aircraft that he would work on. Nurturing this creativity I participated in every art course that was available to me through school. By the time I reached middle school I was drawing out my favorite cartoon shows in composition books. While taking honor courses at James Weldon Johnson I enrolled in their Visual Arts Honor classes learning how to further my drawing skills of figures. I was also introduced to other art techniques such as high and low relief clay tiles, tie die techniques, and basic clay and pottery sculpture. In addition to taking art courses in middle school I participated in the Year Book Committee where I learned the technique of yearbook and photo layout design as well as some basic photography.

Graduating to High School I attended Stanton College Prep to continue with my honor courses in general education and art. During my freshman year I took drawing and painting to further my skills in which I was introduced to figure and still life compositions. Gaining knowledge of how lighting gives way to shape and form I was exposed to several forms of media including charcoal sticks to acrylic and oil paints. Focusing on still life and figure study compositions I yearned for more which led me to audition for Douglas Anderson School of the Arts in the middle of my sophomore year of high school. Attending a rigorous audition where I competed against more than 150 student applicants, I was one of 35 students to be accepted into the school during the middle of my sophomore year.

While at Douglas Anderson (D.A.) I majored in Visual Arts where the school exposed me to various mediums and forms of art produced within the Fine Art Industry. During my education at D.A., I studied Art History learning the techniques and biographies of the masters from the Renaissance to Modern Art and Architecture as well as the primitive art forms of cave drawings and paintings. I learned the concepts and disciplines of color theory, lighting, shading, figure and still life study compositions. I also took photography in which I learned the technical aspects of the 35 Millimeter camera such as

apertures, exposure settings, and photo developing process in a dark room. During my photography course I also learned how to utilize Adobe Photoshop 1.0. I studied print making where I learned the techniques of linoleum carving, dry-point and zinc-plate etching as well as calligraphic printing techniques. I took a sculpture course where I learned to take sketch ideas and create 3 dimensional models and sculptures out of them. I took advanced figure study drawing where I obtained the skills of contour and blind contour drawing in a variety of mediums from pencil, ink, marker, charcoal and even crayons. Took Arts & Crafts where I was exposed to the methods of silk screening, jewelry making, and even event set creation such as for live performances and large social events. Attended portfolio courses where I learned to receive and accept critiquing of my art work from my peers and the public. The portfolio courses taught me how to make stronger compositions with my artwork and to achieve balance in my pieces. Throughout my high school courses I learned the skills of matting and presentation of my art work to give my pieces a professional polished look for gallery shows and events.

As I graduated high school I immediately sought a higher level of education and art training by attending college. I enrolled in the Florida School of the Arts associated with St. Johns River Community College (SJRCC). While there pursuing a B.A. in Fine Art I took college level Art History courses to further my knowledge in the Art Field. I also took several print making courses seeing the value of reproducible pieces for general market consumption. While taking those courses I learned the finer principles of design, composition and the techniques of Lithography. Excelling at creating meaningful and creative compositions I found myself highlighted in the college's student newspaper within my first year of attendance. I also took many of the college level general education courses to be able to focus more on my art and principles of design. During this time I also began creating designs for tattoos and continued to draw every chance I got.

While in college the dotcom boom sprang about in which I saw an opportunity to expand my art into the digital realm. Deciding to pursue this new direction and not being provided this media at Florida School of the Arts I decided to leave school. Focusing on digital art I pushed myself to learn the skills and techniques of Photoshop which was at version 4 at the time. Seeking more I found myself employed at Website Pros, Inc., which was a startup company seeking to become the leader in the web design and development industry. While there I was trained and certified in Dreamweaver 4 by Macromedia. During my employment I was put through rigorous training courses in Copywriting, Layout Design for the Web, as well as Search Engine Optimization (SEO) in which I received certifications in each of these disciplines. As the web industry changed I still yearned for more than just using the GUI interface of the web software tools. I self-taught myself advanced HTML, CSS, Classic ASP programming, as well as JavaScript manipulation. Still not satisfied I began to push my art and coding further by exposing myself to Macromedia Flash as well as storyboarding/prototype for dynamic database websites. As the industry grew and the company's goals changed I learned the skills of Ecommerce design as well as the business and legal aspects of Internet Sales and Marketing. To better myself still I focused on quality control over my designs, coding, and content of every site that I produced. So much so that I became the lead custom designer working on high profile accounts as well as the companies own internal sites and online marketing and sales portals.

After many years at Website Pros I found myself still seeking for more not only in the industry but in my income potential as well. Leaving there I began a career at Citibank learning the complexity of Content Management Systems, Legal Content Management and Strategies and furthered my skills in

HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. While Employed I learned the intricacies of relational databases, XML, and document writing for training and reporting purposes. Still drawing and freelancing on my own time I decided to leave Citi to further pursue my passion and drive for art. I then found myself employed as a graphic designer for an online educational company, Triumph Learning. Working in their content management system I became the lead in writing HTML and CSS for their content. As well as helping them optimize their sites for SEO purposes. Realizing my design and coding skill sets, Triumph got me involved in the design process of their newly created marketing and sales portals in which I expanded my knowledge of JQuery manipulation. I also participated in the creation of the technical and process documentation to help their efficiencies and quality of their web project initiatives.

Still yearning for more and needing a larger income stream to support my family I enrolled myself back in college to finish what I started so many years ago. During my first quarter I landed a position at Blue Cross and Blue Shield as an UI Developer. I am now considered an expert in Usability Layout Design, Graphic Design and coding of HTML and CSS. Still pushing my passion for art and expressing this to my current management staff I have been involved in their innovate projects creating graphics and designs for interactive video games and mobile devices. Pushing myself further to learn animation I hope to achieve my ultimate goal in being able to create cartoons and bring them to the web space.