



Armory Artist Profile – Sara Bookspan

Sara has been creating and building things for as long as she can remember. Her foundation was developed by her wonderful second grade teacher, Mr. Ito who would teach his students sketching and perspective drawing for math class and diorama building for history. Sara was also quite theatrical when younger taking classes and painting sets with the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco. As a child she attended a camp where the classes were designed much like the Armory classes. It was there that Sara developed a love for ceramics and the process of creating things. The camp was focused on the arts; teaching campers weaving, woodworking, painting, sewing, metal work, and photography. Sara says this was the true foundation of her work and much of what she learned at the camp has been her cornerstone.

Although she studied art education at Humboldt State University in Northern California, Sara never thought of herself as an artist. At school she minored in ceramics and wanted to become an art therapist. Sara thinks of herself as someone who enjoys creating. Her process has always been playful and exploratory. She loves to work with her hands and get dirty. It is Sara's belief that everyone is an artist.

Sara says that the Armory Art Center is one of the most accepting and open communities she has ever been a part of. Granted she's only been at the Armory for a year, but the Armory is quite literally what keeps her in Florida.

When she's teaching, Sara likes to teach her learners to slow down, and take a moment to get clear and intentional with what they are about to create. She thinks it's important for them to truly see what they want to make before they execute it. Sara teaches her learners that it's okay if a project doesn't turn out perfectly because perfection does not exist. The most important thing for her learners to learn, is that they can keep on creating and grow from their mishaps. Sara facilitates a space for learners to be themselves. It is her belief that children spend too much of their lives being critiqued; she sees her role as a guide for her students to learn the power of their expression. Her learners are Sara's greatest teachers.

If you've never taken one of Sara's classes, you should know that they are FUN! It's all about exploration. There are guiding principles, but really, it's a time to explore and listen to good music. It's okay if you have never played with clay. If that's what the class is doing, you'll learn in the process.

Outside the Armory, Sara is a Board-Certified Behavior Analyst working with the disability community. She educates families and advocates for the needs of her clients. Sara specializes in teaching leisure skills to adults with limited verbal skills. Much of her work incorporates various forms of creating art, obviously!

Despite the cliché, Sara believes that art is all around us. She enjoys finding art in nature, specifically while exploring the beach and scuba diving. She sees beauty in the natural fractals on the ocean floor or the patterns and textures on sea creatures. She used to live in Kenya and Tanzania and never witnessed so much art in one place. She says, “Everyone makes art there... the tailors, the street artists, even the children who have taken recycled jerry cans and transformed them into toys. They all possess a level of raw, authenticity that is unlike anything you can see in a museum.”

Growing up in the Bay Area of California, she spent a lot of time at the Legion of Honor Museum, De Young Museum, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Sara’s favorite artists range from the obscure to the more mainstream. These include Serge Attukwei Clottey - ‘Afrogallonism,’ a Ghanaian artist, Malene Barnett, John Oles, Andy Goldsworthy, Frida Khalo, Sevy Marie Eicher, a 17-year-old woman with Down’s syndrome, Eric Fischl, sculptors/ceramic artists Kyle and Kelly Phelps, Hannah Höch and Kawai Kanjirō.

It won’t surprise you to know that Sara’s art isn’t available for sale at any physical location or website. If someone asks to buy something they like, she will usually give it to them.

– Contributed by Denise Mariani
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