



## Artist Instructor Profile – Michael Las Casas

Michael Las Casas has been creating art and making things since he was a child. His first "memory" is building his first model airplane when he was 6 years old. His mother's favorite story about his "creativity" was from when he was a toddler and one of four children. His "Ma" said that before Michael would get out of bed, she would have to hide anything that could become an art project. He would draw on anything, including his siblings or the family dog if they stood around long enough. Michael's first real recollection of creating art is from when he was about the ten years old, when he walked through a local arts and crafts fair, and came upon an older gentleman and his watercolors that really inspired him to want to create art. To this day, Michael still remembers that one piece on display of a boat in the fog. He still imagines that one day he will paint one just like it. He has called himself an artist since he was 12 or 13 years old.

For the most part, Michael is self-taught, though he did complete two years of fine art studies at the University of Wisconsin. He parted ways with formal schooling, but never lost his thirst for the knowledge and new skills. Michael bought many art books and read, copied, and learned through trial and error from them. Any time he saw a work of art that intrigued him, he would tell himself, "I've got to learn how to do that!" Every employment opportunity he had to create art was his "education;" from airbrushing t-shirts, to painting on clothing for a women's fashion manufacturer, to working as a screen print artist, to his current "day job" as a graphic designer.

Michael never thought about being a teacher of art until 2009, when he took a class at the Armory, and befriended the teacher. After the class had ended, the instructor expressed how helpful he was with the other students, said he was a natural teacher, and encouraged him to apply to teach at the Armory. He did, and here he is, 11 years later, loving his classes and his students.

Unequivocally, the most special thing to Michael about the Armory Art Center is his students! He feels there is nothing more satisfying than seeing their eyes light up when "the click" comes on when they realize they have learned something they never thought they could do. Michael loves to push them in new directions they didn't even know they could go. He enjoys hearing their laughter when he jokes with them, or they take "pot shots" at him. The music Michael plays in class and the creative vibe he creates are what he believes brings them back, over and over again. He truly lives by the adage, "If you love what you do, you'll never have to work a day in your life."

Michael believes that knowing how to "see" & draw, is the key to everything for his students. Aside from mastering the practical skills, he wants his students to always keep learning, practicing, and trying to see the beauty in everything, including the mundane. Everything has

great composition if you know how to look for it. Michael's classes are fun, because he believes that if you're not having fun, you're not learning. He believes that with perseverance, anyone can create art, you just have to find the right "vehicle" for you to express yourself.

When he is not creating art or teaching his classes Michael is a graphic designer for the State of Florida, Department of Health. He has worked there for 32 years. He has also participated in street painting festivals around the country for the past 27 years. He enjoys wood working and still builds the aforementioned model airplanes.

Michael doesn't get much of a chance to go out and view art, because he's so busy. But if he must choose, he loves viewing art on Pinterest (LOL!) One of his life's goals is to see the Louvre in Paris, and the works of Michelangelo & Leonardo Da Vinci. He doesn't have a favorite artist, but he is drawn to the Renaissance Masters and the Impressionists.

Michael's motto: "Even Shakespeare had to learn the alphabet!" Michael's art may be purchased on his website at [www.michaellascasas.com](http://www.michaellascasas.com)

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