



Artist Instructor Profile – Otto Rutt

Otto Rutt is a new Screen-printing instructor at the Armory Art Center. Aside from basic drawing and an art history classes in high school, he didn't begin a dedicated study of art until retiring from the Marine Corps in 2012. Prior to joining the Marine Corps, Otto earned an undergraduate degree in economics from Harvard University and later an MBA from University of Chicago. In 2015, Otto started making art at Old School Square in Delray Beach. He decided he really wanted to make a serious effort, so he enrolled at Florida Atlantic University. After an initial two years of undergraduate classes, Otto applied for and subsequently finished a Master of Fine Arts in studio art.

Otto's earliest memory of creating art is doing finger painting on the kitchen table as a toddler. He remembers it being so tactile and colorful. Early on in grade school, the first images Otto remembers specifically are drawings of drag racing cars. In junior high school, he had dedicated art classes, and he remembers very accurately the instructions by Sister Marcos on how to do perspective.

Otto produced a lot of art in the degree program at FAU. He expended a lot of time and effort, as you might imagine. Well into the graduate program, Otto began to feel confident about his capabilities. There are few paintings and prints he created then that he believes crossed a personal threshold – a personal expectation – of art. Working with many artists and corroborating ideas on art also confirmed for him that he possessed the requisite knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes of an artist. Otto's work has been on display at the Cornell Museum in Delray Beach, TheatreLAB Gallery at FAU, and in the 2021 Annual Student and Instructor Exhibition at the Armory Art Center, where his *Untitled*, Photopolymer Intaglio Print won the Best in Show award.

Screen-printing is very process intensive. Mistakes and frustration can happen at each step. But Otto knows that once students are confident with the process, then they become very productive. The first step is to understand how to effectively use a screen to apply ink to paper. Then, you can step back and dive into how to design and make a screen. It is very experiential, and it can be daunting if you try to tackle too much too soon. The most technical part of the process is working with photo-sensitive emulsion, which is part of "burning" an image on a screen. The image essentially becomes a stencil on the screen and then you use a squeegee to apply the ink to paper. Viola. The photo-process of screen-printing can make for very detailed and unique images – very different from all other print or painting methods.

Aside from teaching the technical skills necessary for screen-printing, Otto wants students to understand that their creative goals are achievable. Art is a big universe, and they can fit in. Once prospective artists get a sense of how to focus and gain skills, they can then feel confident that their effort will be repaid. Regarding screen-printing, learning the process slowly and

hands-on can lead to a long relationship with the medium. As such, patience and determination are essential for making progress. Additionally, he would like students to expand their ideas of what they can create and challenge their skills. He highly recommends taking classes. Classes are useful and effective. Trying to learn and create on your own can be blazingly self-defeating. He started on his own, but very quickly wanted to learn from someone with expertise and to have fellow classmates who would add enthusiasm and energy.

Outside his work at the Armory, Otto is a very strong advocate of literature. Much of his artistic inspiration comes from reading. He sticks mainly to classics, or canonical works, such as Shakespeare's plays or Dostoyevsky's novels. He also tries to stay physically active, getting two or three workouts in per week.

Otto is a big fan of museums. Having grown up in Chicago, the Art Institute there is a personal favorite. But there are museums everywhere, and he honestly can say that he has never been disappointed. Otto also views a lot of art online; he streams documentaries, videos, and images. He highly recommends incorporating research into daily habits. Otto is always encountering articles or images that send him into research mode. He enjoys the research aspect of art immensely; there is so much to learn, and the histories are immensely engaging. Ask Otto about his favorite artists and he'll tell you he has a ton of favorites; he has notes and images on file for well over 100 artists. But, if Otto had to pick just one, it would be Gerhard Richter. He is clearly on the short list of the world's contemporary best. His breadth and depth of skill is immeasurable. Otto has been deeply inspired by his abstract works.

Otto finds the Armory Art Center to be a very special place. He greatly appreciates both the people and the facility. The instructors are high caliber professionals, and the studios are immensely suited to creating art. Otto feels that the students, as well, are quite skilled. There is a universal appreciation and dedication to quality. This is very evident in the impressive art that gets created at the Armory.

If you are interested in purchasing Otto's artwork, you can contact the Armory Art Center. Otto's work will be on display during the Armory Art Center's **NEW & NOW: Artists-In-Residence and New Faculty** exhibition from September 9 through October 21, 2022 in the East Gallery at the Armory. You can meet him at the exhibition's opening reception on Thursday, September 8th from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m.

– Contributed by Denise Mariani
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