

SoCCA's 2020 Art Instructors



Susan Brereton

Susan Brereton's passion is creating art and her first love is teaching art. Brereton works in a realistic style, focusing on color and composition. Flowers, portraits, and Maine scenes are among her favorite subjects for her oil, pastel, and watercolor paintings. For the past few years she has concentrated on children's and pet portraits. She says, "I try to capture their innocence and beauty by using color to focus on their expressions and eyes." Using a unique color palette, her portraits emit an inner glow and freshness. She juxtaposes warm and cool colors, often using an under painting of purple, to add depth, volume and warmth. Brereton continues to experiment with her style. She was inspired to go in a new direction, painting with a large 12-inch palette knife, using bold strokes of color and form. She plans to continue painting in both styles but her focus will always be on the qualities of life, vitality and beauty. Brereton teaches an oil painting class at SoCCA.



James Brunelle Jr

James has administrative employment history working with regional non-profit art centers, museums, public and private schools in outreach education, administrative program coordination, and studio management. He's received grant funding for individual fellowships, implemented partnership projects through NEA funded programs, and has received awards for his works in ceramics, printing and painting from museums, arts organizations and art festivals. He has completed studio work within Artist Residencies at English Harbour Arts Centre, English Harbour, NL, and Billings Forge Community Works, Hartford, CT. James also continues ongoing professional associations with Gordon Fine Arts Gallery, Stamford, CT, contracts preparatory and auction work with Trinity International Auctions, Avon, CT, and is an active Board Member and Studio Manager with Art League New Britain, New Britain, CT.



Mary DeCroce

All of my best childhood memories involve creating something; especially making "stuff" in my Dad's workshop. One of my clearest memories was an attentive adult looking at my artwork when I was 7 years old and exclaiming, "Hey you're good at that." I believe that was the moment I began my career as an artist. My inspiration comes from the power The Arts have to bring into the physical world thoughts and feelings which can affect people and change their lives. Who hasn't heard a piece of music that brought them to tears, read a book that changed them forever, looked at a painting that took their breath away. Michelangelo's "David", Klimt's "The Kiss", Shakespeare's sonnets, Beethoven's sonatas all attest to this fact. It is with this passion I create and share my artwork. The Arts are our history. They tell the world who we are, what is important to us and reach into our very souls, transforming us from generation to generation. My mission is to share the Arts through public art installations, teaching, and creative place making. It has been and continues to be a wonderful and inspiring adventure.



Kristin Fredrickson

Kristin Fredrickson is a Fashion Institute of Technology graduate, who worked as a freelance fashion illustrator in NYC. She has apprenticed as a hand lettering sign painter and is a Holistic practitioner. She has her own business teaching Tai Chi and Yoga and has taught figure illustration in NYC, Vero Beach FL and W. Cornwall CT.

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Margaret Freedman

Margaret is a certified art teacher and has taught for 16 years in public and private elementary schools. She has a current position is Assistant Museum Educator at The New Britain Museum of American Art, and also teaches the pre-school Art Start program.



Jhenea Gooden

I am truly inspired by the art process. The ability to express oneself and bring to life ideas and feelings from within that resonate with others is powerful. While I was never classically trained as an artist or teacher, I have earned my wings by perusing my goals on an alternative route. My passion for art and has driven me to learn and practice new techniques year-round. With art programs diminishing I felt a sense of urgency to take part in providing a safe space for young students to be exactly who they are. A place where they are supported in expressing themselves fully using techniques I pass along. I have found that place in SoCCA. I envision a world where imaginations run wild and free in everyone. Where there is less trash and what's left always looks like treasure. Where there is always something even when you feel there is nothing. Art is everywhere and the materials to create it are too. Even when you say you're not an artist, I believe in YOU.

Deb Jaffe



My career as an artist has has many phases but has been consistently incorporating natural elements into functional designs. As a student at Rhode Island School of Design and Glasgow School of Art I learned the building blocks of traditional craftsmanship and design. As a young professional product designer for Harman Consumer Group I used feminine inspirations from my environment to create hi-fi audio products which had been traditionally very masculine. My designs won accolades in national and international press including Rolling Stone and Playboy Magazines. Later as my family grew, my creative outlet of jewelry design turned into a thriving craft business which supported my family. My products were mass manufactured and sold in major department stores throughout the United States and Canada including Target Stores, Nieman Marcus and TJX group. In 2006 I opened KanduBeads which started as an online outlet for other artists to purchase my own line of unique beads and supplies for jewelry making. My products emphasized the natural elements and beauty of organic materials. In 2009 I opened my first brick and mortar store where I learned my passion for teaching others.

Now, I share my skills as an artist and maker to others by teaching my own designs and techniques. Nothing is as fulfilling as teaching. As a solo artist I felt I was only limited by my own



Barbara Labutis

A self-taught artist, who has taken a few art classes throughout the years. I have been painting and creating art projects since I was a child. Media of choice are acrylics, pastels and recently started exploring with watercolors. Some of my work was featured on the covers of Interpretations and Inner Tapestry publications as well as on display at the Rail for Trails Art Project in Southington, CT. I have taught painting classes in various locations and I look forward to enriching the community with more of my artwork in the future.

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Lauri MacLean

'Art is the highest form of hope.' Gerhard Richter

Lauri MacLean, celebrated dance innovator with more than twenty years' experience at the helm of her own dance studio, is recognized in the regional creative community for her significant contribution to the field as both an artist and educator. Lauri now turns her creative vision to the canvas where she choreographs paint. My work is an expression of the subconscious that surfaces and emerges through me as I participate in this visual alchemy. This truly is a form of magic. I believe myself to be a conduit; allowing something deep to be expressed through line, color, and shape. An archeologist of the soul as it were. The parallels to dance are obvious to me and I have found great joy in translating my skills and passion as a dancer/choreographer to the movement of paint on this surface. Long inspired by the great Abstract Expressionists, I am



Andy Mars

Andy Mars is a freelance photographer, photo artist, and instructor (teaches digital photography and iPhone photo app classes & workshops). She is a Studio Artist at Farmington Valley Arts Center (FVAC) in Avon, CT. She is an event photographer specializing in weddings and corporate events. Her main areas of "focus" are nature, people, animals, seascapes and urban scenes. Her work has been exhibited at the Memorial Arts Museum in Rochester, NY, Manhattan, Connecticut galleries, and various Soho Gallery restaurants. Andy was previously the Outreach Director of Professional Women Photographers (PWP) when she lived in NYC.



Mo Myra

Mo's is primarily a plein-air watercolor painter, her work has been on display nationally in group exhibitions as well as solo exhibits, most notable among these was the highly competitive Society of Illustrators Student competition in New York City. Mo's paintings can be found in numerous private collections with collectors ranging worldwide, as well as available to the public through public art installations. She works full time as a commissioned painter in addition to teaching watercolor privately, and for different institutions including having taught classes at New Britain Museum of American Art. Mo graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Illustration program at the Hartford Art School, and furthered her education while completing a residency at the Farmington Valley Arts Center in 2018. Furthermore, she is passionate about bringing art to the community, she is an active board member at the art League of New Britain.

Abbe Wade

Abbe is an award-winning multi-media artist skilled in oils, acrylics, watercolors, pastels, pen& ink, and anything else that attracts her attention. She has always wanted to be an artist, from the time as a young girl her older brother would entertain her by making pencil drawings. Painting under the name P.R. Bailey, her art education has been culled from extensive classes and workshops in her adopted state of CT. In addition to local instructors, she has studied with nationally known artists including Tom Lynch, Carolyn Jasper, Bob Burridge, John Howard Sanden and Daniel E. Greene.



Abbe specializes in portraits and has been teaching art for more than sixty years. Her artwork is currently being shown in more than thirteen states. In 2006 she opened the Farmington River Schools of Art, Plainville's premier school of art for adults. Located at 73 East Main Street Rear in Plainville, CT, the school caters to adults who seek in-depth instruction in any medium, beginner to advanced level. Her intention is to work with the student to accomplish their goals. Classes are purposely kept small so that individual attention can be maximized.