



Brian Dodd works on a painting which will be displayed in an upcoming show.

Artist Allows Humor Into His Work

By Rob Nielsen

Twenty-one year old Brian Dodd was born with a gift for painting. Diagnosed with autism in October of 1992, Brian has bravely fought it through the medium of art. He says his interest in painting dates back to childhood

“I guess it started in elementary school,” Dodd says. “It’s been so long I forgot why I got interested in painting, I’ve just always had a knack for it.”

According to Brian’s mother, Susan Ohsfeldt, Dodd started off by creating stacks of drawings at school.

“At Mark Twain [Elementary School], he started drawing a lot because they didn’t have painting,” Ohsfeldt said. “Then at Pin

Oak [Middle School] he had a teacher named Ms. Vass and took two years of art with her. She gave him a whole wall and just let him paint. But he used to draw a lot. We had huge stacks of paper from Pin Oak of all the drawings he’s done.”

Dodd went on to explain his painting process and where he’s gained his inspiration.

“I use acrylic paints because they show better than water paints and take less time to dry than oil paint,” Dodd says. “Basically I paint what’s going through my head right at the moment and then paint whatever colors go best with it. Most of [the portraits] are people I’ve seen in real life, but then I just got to thinking ‘what would they

look like if they weren’t human?’”

Dodd’s work has attracted much attention since he made his first “professional” painting in May of 2009, titled Napoleon La Roach and selling for \$250. As a result, he has several paintings that will be hanging in various galleries across the country including the Pump Project Art Complex in Austin from Aug. 6 – 20, sponsored by the State Organization on Arts and Disabilities (VSA) and the Eighth International Exhibition of Artists with Disabilities at the Viewpoint Gallery in Schenectady, New York from Sept. 16 – Oct. 14. Dodd will also be an exhibitor at this year’s Abilities Expo at the Reliant Cen-

ter Aug. 26 – 28. This comes in addition to paintings already hanging in the West University School for Autistic Children, the University of Houston Law School and the Arc of Dallas. He says the attention he's received for his artwork has come as a bit of a shock while at the same time, it's bitter-sweet for his mother.

"I actually got quite a surprise," Dodd says. "I knew I was good but I didn't know I was that good."

"Sometimes I feel sad when they leave," Ohsfeldt says. "It's like you

miss them because they're a part of him."

Ohsfeldt says finding places for the paintings has been an interesting experience for her.

"I was a lawyer and a real estate broker and so I really don't know the art world, so this has been a new experience for me," Ohsfeldt says. "You have to get the applications in, you have to do black shadow, all this photography stuff you have to do. It's not really that easy. It's a learning curve."

So far he has painted 15 differ-

ent portraits. He lists Craniac, a painting that Dodd will be keeping for himself, as his favorite painting so far. He also boasts an impressive list of inspirations for the titles he gives to his art. Titles ranging from Eastern Bloc Robot Cowboy to Four Armed Savage Pretzel Man.

"I have many favorite artists like Leonardo and Picasso so I just do a little research and I just think 'what would they name them,'" Dodd says.

