

FINE ART

Andy Mast



Andy Mast The Evolution of an Artistic *Miracle*

By Teri Walker and Kole Hunt

In 1991, on a small farm in the rural Midwest, a gifted

artist was born to a family whose devotion to God ran as deep as the roots of the crops they grew. They named him Andy and raised him in a Plain Community where he was taught the value of hard work, love of family and devotion to God. In those early days, he had no way of knowing how precious a gift his faith would one day become and how it would allow him to fulfill a deep desire to serve others. Through young Andy Mast, the blessings of healing and hope would come to be shared with many throughout the world. Faith would bring him through the darkest of days and change his life forever. Andy's story is simply amazing.

As with generations before, the Mast family lived quietly on a small farm in southern Illinois. Andy attended school, graduating at the end of the 8th grade. Like other Amish children, he was then given the choice of working in the family business or learning different skills with a mentor. The decision for Andy was simple. He enjoyed working alongside his father and especially loved tending to the family horses. In those idyllic days, Andy seized every moment he could and devoted it to his passion. Often, he would come in late at night after work and draw by the light of an oil lamp into dawning hours of the next day to come. He undoubtedly knew from a very young age that he would use a pencil in all its simplicity to create art.

“Drawing is among my first memories. According to my mother, I was attracted to pencil and paper when I was still in diapers and would rather draw, than play with toys. I was obsessed with drawing and playing with crayons even before I started school. In the sixth grade, I felt a calling and knew that drawing was what I wanted to do with my life. However, I didn't know how to pursue it. There were no professional fine artists or art mentors in my community, so I kept all my dreams in my heart and didn't share it with anyone else. Becoming a fine artist within our community would have seemed impossible to everyone. I did, however, become the poster child for decorating the school for events and programs.”

Andy's love of horses provided the inspiration for his art. He admired their strength and marveled at their beauty. Working with horses offered an escape from the repetitive routines of daily life. At night, he would retreat to the family's kitchen table and spend hours drawing equine pictures by lantern light, while the family slept. Andy never expected this peaceful existence to change, but the future had other plans.

Andy awoke on the morning of January 19, 2009, to a gloom that was so dismal, it made morning chores difficult. His father called him to work inside, instead of being out in the frigid weather. Around noon, he asked Andy to move one of the horses to a paddock for exercise, while he ran an errand. The moments that followed are forever shrouded in mystery, for in those few short minutes, Andy's Mast's life was changed forever.

Mr. Mast returned to find his 17-year-old son lying unconscious on the frozen ground with his favorite yearling standing protectively over him. Andy had suffered a traumatic brain injury and was in critical condition. His limp and lifeless body was air-lifted by helicopter to a St. Louis medical facility, where he remained unconscious for days. The Mast family gathered in the room each day to pray for God to save their beloved son.

The doctors did all they could, but Andy remained in a coma. While he lingered between life and death, his devoted parents never gave up hope that he would awaken and recover. Knowing the seriousness of his injuries could mean that their son might never be the same if he lived, they prayed without ceasing. Finally, after many hours, Andy opened his eyes. He would later describe the moment as “being filled with an overwhelming sense of love.” The accident will never be explained for he is unable to remember the details of what happened that tragic morning.

Recovering from a significant brain injury is a long process, filled with few successes and many setbacks. Instead of trying to remember the accident, Andy focused his damaged mind on the process of recovery. He describes the years that followed as being in a dark place. “I prayed to die,” he explained. “I was deprived of maturity of expertise in our culture and for five years, was completely unable to do anything physical. I couldn’t attend church, socials or large events.” Andy was a prisoner in his own body and endured the humiliation of having to be assisted with skills he once took for granted. He grew so weak, that his mother often had to bring meals to the bedside and assist him to eat. As the days continued, Andy became overwhelmed with depression and uncertainty about the future. The ultimate frustration came when he lost the ability to draw. What had always come so naturally to this gifted young artist, was taken away by the cruel accident. Andy lost control of his body, but never his faith.

He describes the years after the accident as a journey into the deep abyss of disability. For those five years, Andy found himself in and out of rehabilitation facilities until one day he realized neither the doctors nor himself could provide the help he needed. That amount of healing could only come from the greatest healer of all time. Fortunately, it was someone Andy Mast knew well, and he turned to the faith that had sustained him since childhood. Andy asked God to mend his broken mind and body as only He can.

“This is where the unexplainable came in. It was indescribable,” he explained. “I became fully aware that life is a gift. I began to wonder if I had died, would I have been ready to meet my Maker? I did some tremendous soul searching and came to realize that God was giving me a second chance. Without Him, I am nothing; my actions are all in vain; even my drawing. Only through Him, do I accomplish anything.”

Andy believes that God was showing him how very powerful He is by giving Andy a deeper understanding and empathy for the suffering of others. This realization was life-changing and left him with a deep desire to use the experience to help others. Through hard work, patience and faith, Andy was slowly given back the ability to draw and art became his mission and his legacy.

In the spring of 2014, Andy fell in love, but the relationship was not to be and he found himself headed back into the dark tunnel

of depression. Deciding a new start was needed, Andy went back into the hospital for chelation treatments to regain his strength. While there, he met a man from Westcliffe, Colorado, and was invited to visit.

At this time, Andy was still perfecting his skills and began preparing drawings for his one-man show in Mt. Vernon, Illinois, which was held in January of 2015. In years prior to his one man show as he was able Andy, participated in fine art competitions at Cedarhurst, in Mt Vernon. He received numerous awards a few Honorable Mentions, Awards of Merit, a first place and some much-needed advice and support from a college professor who was serving as Judge over the contest. The following March, Andy was invited to compete in the Western Spirit Art Show in Cheyenne, Wyoming. He traveled alone by Amtrak Train to compete with over 300 artists. Much to his surprise, he was awarded first place in drawing for his artistic workmanship, A Long Day. Later, the demand for his art increased so greatly that he was finally able to fulfill his dream of becoming a professional artist. One of his paintings, entitled, “Dream Team,” was purchased in Ohio at Live Auction for \$10,000. Another, “A Long Day,” was sold for \$7,500 at his one man show in Mt Vernon, IL on January 2015.

Peace in Solitude



Won the top award of Peoples Choice “1st Place- Best of Show” at the 2019 High Peaks art exhibition at the Sangre de Cristo Art Guilds summer show in Westcliffe, CO.

While in Cheyenne, at the show Andy was given the opportunity to experience ranch life by visiting area ranches. which brought the recovering young artist a lot of healing Andy described the experience as “being in a paradise of wide-open spaces where it was just God and me. I did not know where I would be from one day to the next. I would hitch a ride to the next ranch and ride along sorting or trailing cows. Sleep in their old bunkhouses with a sleeping bag. This was as close as I’ll ever live to a bed-roll cowboy.”

As demand for Andy’s art grew, he stayed the summer of 2015 in Westcliffe, CO where he connected with new friends and found the healing he so desperately needed. He now works from his own studio and gallery selling reproductions and original pencil drawings. Andy’s father constructs special frames to showcase his son’s incredible art.

Andy's drawings are a testament to his suffering and recovery. From the passion of his pencil to the devotion of a father. Andy's art is breathtaking right down to the framing. This young mans family has walked the road of triumph and growth by Andy's side, through the trials and tribulation of good days and long days.

"A Long Day", was conceived in Andy's darkest time. He connected with the weary cowboy on a deeply emotional level. It's how I grew up he says. With all our farm work, just because the sun had sunk in the west did not mean we were done for the day. Andy keenly related all the darkness in this scene to that of his personal experience. He expressed his own dim ray of hope in the faint light beam shining down on the cowboy and his horse. Due to his extreme debilitation, this piece was in progress for a year and a half and over 400 hours at the drawing board.



A Long Day

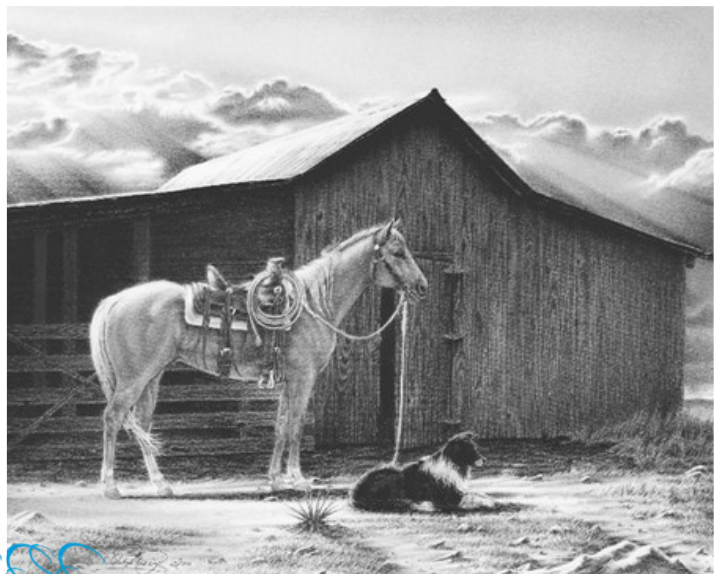
"Spirit of the Valley", is a work of transition for Andy. It is based on his first visit to Westcliffe. He was just emerging from shadows in his life. As I topped this ridge on my weary climb, I got a glimpse of this beautiful valley. The storm clouds of fear and doubt broke. enabling the sun to cast her refreshing light onto the land bringing from above a glorious message of Hope

and Peace, I was captivated. I no longer saw the storm for the healing rays of light profoundly felt like God was in the valley.



Spirit Of The Valley

Later, Andy created a work that expresses the core of friendship titled **"Best Friends"**.



Best Friends

As the end of illness came near with a heartfelt welcome, Andy found his hope renewed. The cold depths of darkness in the clouds are the reflection of the storms that he had endured and walked through by faith. He had just come through the valley of death, weak but undefeated, with the light breaking through the clouds basking him in hope.

The horse and Dog are representative of life on the farm. Each has its place; each has its job and as they all work together, a oneness and bond are forged. "This is what I felt from my caring friends during this time of tribulation in my life. The rocky foreground expresses the rocky trail I had to travel." Looking to the narrow right you can barely catch a glimpse of the wide-

open space that spoke to me and encouraged my soul that my future was full of opportunity and was endless. The horse and dog having emerged from the shadows of the barn, quietly awaited the Master, basking in the light of hope and waiting for the future to unfold.

From an innocent young farmhand to professional artist, the story of Andy Mast's recovery and discovery of a God-given talent, proves that he is more than a suffering hero in a come-back story. His legacy is a testament to the power of love and devotion, strong faith and divine intervention. By sharing his own suffering, Andy offers hope to those still struggling and light to the lost. Andy Mast is truly, the evolution of an artistic miracle.

Andy Mast has created original works that are collected by art enthusiasts and collectors around the world. With original pieces selling for upwards of fifteen thousand dollars and multiple other works that bring admirable prices it can only make one aware of the passion these penciled pieces convey. If you love his art and an original is not something you can purchase, he offers beautiful top-quality prints that will compliment your space.

If you would like to contact Andy or inquire about his art please email or call: Pencil Passions, Andy Mast Fine Art

See his own studio gallery in person at 118 Main in Westcliffe, CO 81252

Studio: 719-431-9973

Office: 618-246-2964

Email: andymastart@plainemails.com

visit his website: www.andymastfineart.com



Faithful Companions

Relationships... Is what this piece is all about. Another good friend of mine underneath a lone cottonwood in one of my favorite spots in the valley, with Faithful Companions by your side.

Morning Devotion



Close to my heart; My love and respect for my subject is expressed with 15 hearts hidden in Morning Devotion. In dedication to a dear friend who's example has greatly impacted my life and inspired me ever since I've known him. Who's love, support and advice has been invaluable in my personal and professional journey.