



Sarah Holl: Teaching Art from the Heart

by Nicola Burnell



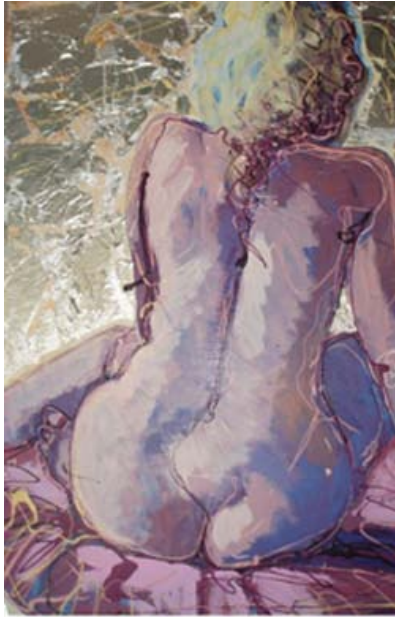
Sarah working in the Guyer Barn Studio Photograph by Andreas Kuehn

Nothing is more important to the fledgling artist than someone who nurtures their creative dreams. Finding a mentor who not only loves to teach, but lives her dream of being an artist, can be the opportunity of a lifetime.

Sarah Holl is an artist, teacher and mentor with the passion and patience to foster even the most tentative of students. Like her own artwork, she is vibrant, colorful and inspiring. It's this energy of playfulness and possibility that has drawn many new students to her weekly figure drawing classes, held at the Guyer Barn, behind her Hyannis studio.

Sarah's love for art was nurtured by her artist father Harry Holl, founder of Scargo Pottery & Art Gallery, in Dennis. "All the time spent with my father was spent creating - we never did anything else," she recalls. "Every Christmas and birthday he always gave me art supplies; really nice ones, which I loved. There's nothing like a brand new box of pastels or markers!"

When asked to lead an arts revitalization project on Pearl Street, in Hyannis, Sarah welcomed the challenge to bridge the gap between the Cape's art community and the public. As Pearl Street's first Artist in Residence, she opened the doors to her Artspace Studio, built in the 1920's, to anyone curious enough to enter.



Hershey's Kiss, by Sarah Holl,
Mixed Media Collage with Resin

With Artspace located 46 Pearl Street, across the street from Sturgis Charter Public School, Sarah saw an opportunity to reach out directly to teenagers. A former art instructor for the Cape Cod Museum of Art and Cape Cod Community College, Sarah now teaches weekly figure drawing classes to teens and adults at the Guyer Barn.

"I started teaching teens at the museum after getting involved in the school-to-career art intern program. I really enjoyed turning teens on to art. I remember how much it had helped me when I was a teen."

These after-school classes enhance the education the students receive in school by focusing more closely on observation and technique. "I show students how to see. I also encourage them to have their own voice and the importance of that."

The discipline of the class structure serves to push students beyond their comfort zone by timing how long they can work on their piece. This encourages them to work quickly and push past the internal critic that could otherwise slow them down, or halt them altogether.

Each class begins with a warm-up period, where the model will pose in different gestures, followed by longer poses. Sarah instructs her students throughout the class as a group and also on an individual level.



Mellow music helps the art students relax and focus on their work

As students work to the music of Nora Jones and Macy Gray the barn becomes filled with the energy of focused creativity. Hands blackened by charcoal move swiftly over large newsprint as eyes sweep over the model's every line and curve. "Look at the model," Sarah teaches. "Really pay attention to how the light hits the side of the face and the shoulder. Notice how the shadow is tucked under the arm and beneath the thigh."

Under Sarah's gentle yet persuasive tutelage, art emerges from the stark white paper clipped to the top of full-sized easels, as students discover the magic of surrendering to the unpredictable process of creativity.

At the end of each class, Sarah takes time to critique the students' artwork, offering helpful advice and encouragement. Like a mother talking to her artist children she is sensitive to the fine balance between constructive criticism and the nudge her students need to grow. "What a fabulous job!" she praises as she walks back and forth, pointing her red laser dot to the piece being critiqued, while offering suggestions to improve value, form or composition.



Sarah offers constructive criticism

This class structure was familiar to artist/student Karen Ryder from her college days, with one exception; the end-of-class critique was followed by social time for the artists. "It's nice to gather around and chat with fellow classmates, and share stories or just talk about our day."

Sarah provides a generous spread of light hors d'oeuvres and an additional forum for her students to share their experiences in art. "We support and encourage each other in our pursuit of art and share tips and tricks that we've found through experience and experimentation," explains Karen. "I didn't have this kind of experience in my college figure classes as I always had to move on to the next class."

Sarah also enjoys this down time with her students and knows her classes are well worth the \$20 fee. "It's the ultimate art experience; music, food, beautiful subjects, plenty of supplies and lots of support and help when needed." Attending the weekly classes gives Karen a consistency that helps her fit art into her busy schedule. She enjoys the opportunity to apply her creative energy to something others can appreciate.



Sarah's students with the artwork they created in under two hours

Sarah's summer classes filled up so completely that she had to create another class in the Fall designed specifically for teens working on their college portfolios.

In addition to her art classes, Sarah also mentors a couple of students and works with a handful of teenagers on Saturday afternoons. "This is not a formal class, but more of a private instruction/mentoring situation." She can always make room for more students, so if you're interested in learning from one of the best teachers on the Cape give her a call at (508) 364 7949 or email SarahHollArt@Yahoo.com



Nicola Burnell is the Publisher and a contributing writer for this magazine. She teaches Reiki, Personal Empowerment workshops, novel writing & creativity development classes. She also works as a personal and professional consultant.

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