



Steve Derrick's Portraits of the Pandemic

By Jenna Caputo/ Photos by Angela Mia Photography

Sometimes life throws us a curveball and we find ourselves trapped in a situation that feels completely out of control. We can feel helpless and struggle with what we could do to make things just a little bit better. The pandemic has presented the entire world with new challenges we never fathomed we would have to face. And while it has affected us all a little differently, it has indeed affected us all.

Steve Derrick, an artist/video game developer, found himself with a need to do something to make sense of things. "Being in self quarantine, I needed something that would motivate me," he says. "I came across a *Time* magazine article with the person of the year being COVID nurses and was moved by the pictures of their bruised and tired faces. I love doing portraits, so I painted a few and posted them back on Instagram into the same thread and asked if the recipient wanted the original as a thank you."

Word began to spread, and Steve started by getting some requests from Italy, then he reached out to find local doctors and nurses that he could paint as a thank you free of charge. Things began to take off. What started as just a couple of pictures, has now expanded to requests coming in both from across the country and internationally, and has turned into a full-blown art exhibit – *Healing: Portraits of the Pandemic* – at the Albany Center Gallery. The exhibit received national attention, and Steve has since been interviewed by CBS, CNN and the *Washington Post* as well as a variety of other publications.

Often, the portrait requests come with a story attached to the photo about the subject's personal experiences on the frontlines. Steve tries to incorporate these stories into each portrait, not shying away from the cuts, scars and bruises on their faces as many are accustomed to. Instead, he shines a light on them, celebrating their struggles and heroism as they help others throughout this pandemic. He has so far created 110 portraits and continues to receive more requests. Each one is a document of history in the making, and treasured by their individual families, while appreciated by the rest of us for their service. This project has offered Steve a way to do something meaningful during this time, for which he is very grateful.



Born in Sandy, Utah, Steve's youth consisted mostly of catching snakes, lizards and black widows out in the sagebrush fields and creeks near his house at the base of the mountains up until high school when his interests expanded. As one of nine kids in his family, he always grew up surrounded by plenty of drama with five sisters and three brothers. "I think being in the middle, I ended up being the clown," he says. They now each have at least five kids themselves and his immediate family has grown to nearly 80!

Besides catching critters, he also always enjoyed art and ultimately graduated with a BFA in Painting & Drawing from the University of Utah. He first became a storyboard artist, creating storyboards for TV commercials, ad agencies and full feature movies like *Desert Heat* starring Jean Claude VanDam. He worked closely with each director to draft a shot-by-shot illustrated plan, using a comic book style sequence of drawings that shows how they will ultimately shoot the movie. For the next couple of years, he found himself making these storyboards in Utah, Arizona and California, but as a freelance profession, it was a hard, feast or famine life. With three kids at the time, he knew he needed something more stable, so he decided to go back to school for a computer animation degree from the Art Institute of Phoenix.



He loves getting to be around creatives every day "making fun" daily and has had the opportunity to work on many games over the years like Skylanders, Guitar Hero, Crash Bandicoot, Destiny and Tony Hawk Pro Skater. He is also involved with the Upstate Alliance for the Creative Economy, Questar and Capital Region BOCES, Albany Can Code, East Greenbush Business Advising Group and STEM Ecosystems, as well as serving on many curriculum review boards for colleges and universities for video game development.

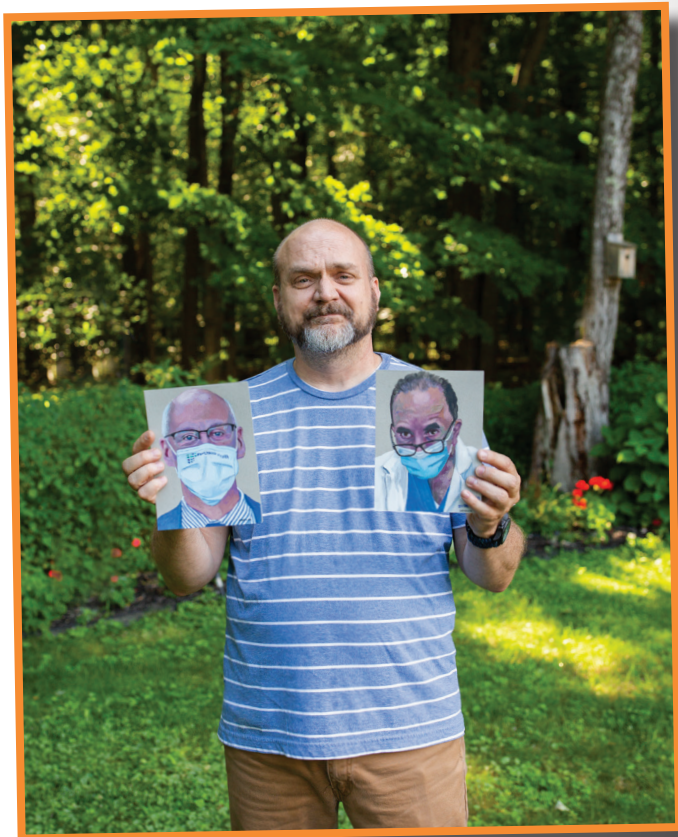
In his free time, Steve loves to travel and learn new languages. He studied French in high school then served a two-year mission for his church in northern Italy. When he returned to university, he studied Italian and Spanish. He loves French and Italian pop music and also watches a lot of foreign movies. His favorite places to travel are Italy and the UK.

While at school, he worked as a security guard at an upscale retirement community and met Terrie, a waitress in the community restaurant. "Cutest uniform ever!" he jokes, and the rest became history. The two married and had four children of their own – Morgan, Madison, Reagan and Parker, as well as two Tshi Zus, Wally and Gnocchi, and their first grandchild on the way. They all love to travel and watch Bruins hockey, and Terrie and the girls will watch anything true crime related. Steve also serves on the committee for the Plein Air Festival of Round Lake

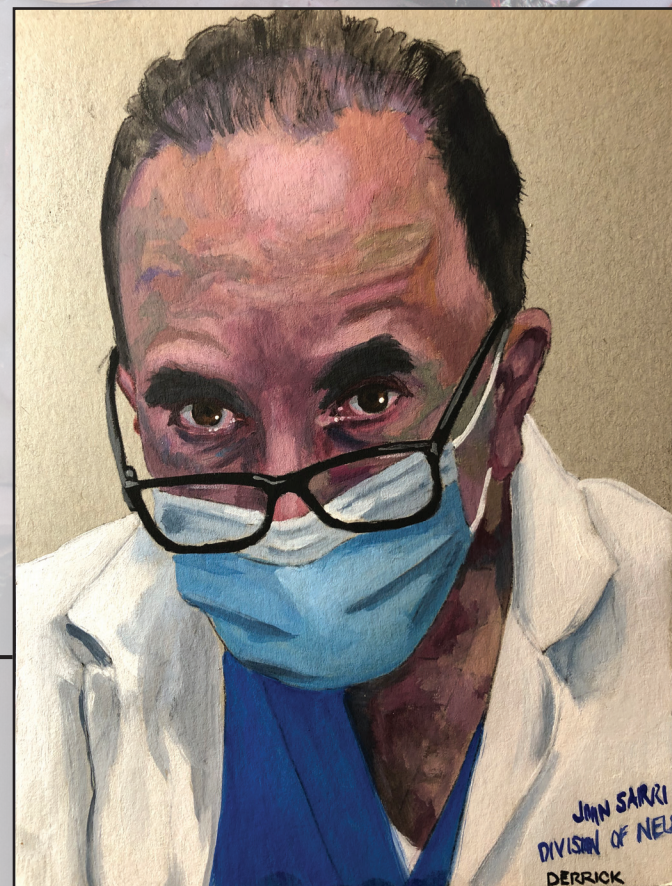


Open to jobs anywhere but in California, he heard about a small startup, Vicarious Visions, here in Troy, NY and interviewed for a position as a texture artist in video game development. Over the last 21 years, he has transitioned from artist, to art department head, to Chief of Staff and finally to his current role as Director, Organization Development, leading internal training and staff development, business partnership, university and school relationship building and community outreach.





Katie Smith, RN, Colorado



through the Malta League of the Arts. This outdoor painting festival was canceled this year due to the pandemic, but they are hoping to bring it back next year.

Even while working on something else, Steve never lost his love of art for fun. “I sketch everywhere I am – airports, meetings and even in the back at church. It helps me pay attention,” he says. When working on his portraits, he usually works in gouache, but also sometimes uses acrylic.

“This new collection was inspired by what we are living and experiencing. I was moved by what the medical workers are doing out there and wanted to give back. The stories and their pain in the pictures have driven me and expanded this into a much bigger project than originally I thought it would be, but it has really given me purpose during all this working from home and quarantine.”

Steve will have a new website up soon, but in the meantime, his work can be found on his Instagram account at @sderrick_bunkerboy, at the Albany Center Gallery (albanycentergallery.org/acg360) and upcoming at the National Museum of Labor in New Jersey, with more exhibits to come.

Dr. John Sarris - Graduate of Albany Medical College and trained in neurosurgery at Albany Medical Center. He came down with Parkinson's disease 10 years ago and lost his ability to operate, but has been practicing in Neurocritical care for the last 10 years in Toms River, NJ. He has been on the front lines every single day in the ER as well as the hospital floors with COVID patients since the pandemic began.



Amanda Johnson, MD - A Pediatric Critical Care Specialist at the pediatric ICU at UMass Memorial Hospital and mom of 2 boys.



Rebekah Maciorowski, RN - Works in Denver but traveled to NYC to help. Ended up getting COVID while there and left with lung damage.



Evanna Burwardt, RN - Worked ER unit at St. Mary's in Waterbury, CT and at the COVID units at Bridgeport and St. Mary's.



Brynn Gibbons, RN from Paloma Valley, CA