

January 26, 2016

## Mount Mercy Art Department Molds and Shapes Aspiring Art Students

In order to have a thriving and successful art program, one must have diverse course offerings and talented personnel to teach the courses. Mount Mercy Academy, a Catholic College Preparatory High School for young women can unequivocally state that it possesses both the courses and the talented instructors.

The art department at Mount Mercy offers eleven courses in art, including Studio classes in: Art One, Drawing & Painting, Advanced Drawing & Painting, Fiber Arts, Ceramics, Sculpture, Digital Photography, Advanced Digital Media, Portfolio Preparation, Advanced Placement Studio in Art and Art History.

While all schools offer art courses, Mount Mercy's art department has advantages that many schools do not. Mount Mercy has its own art gallery where five art shows are held each year, a darkroom, an electric pottery wheel, and a dedicated Mac Lab for Digital Photography. Another asset that sets the Mount Mercy art department apart is its inclusion in the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) initiative. The art program undergoes review and change every year and its instructors believe that the art department just keeps getting better and truly offers something for everyone.

Mount Mercy's art department has been fortunate to have the services of Jacqueline Welch, award winning artist and nurturing teacher for the past twenty three years. Welch, who holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in painting and a Master's degree in Visual Arts/Painting, has also taught at the Friendship House in Lackawanna, in the Arts in Education Program through Buffalo State College, in the Art with Artists Program at the Albright Knox Art Gallery and in the Lancaster Summer Art Program. Some of the venues where Welch's work has been shown are: the Erie Art Museum, the Kirkland Art Center in Clinton NY, Limner Gallery in Hudson, NY, Glass Growers Gallery in Erie, PA, Monroe Community College, Mercyhurst College and Niagara Community College. Some of the many shows in Buffalo that have included Welch's work were held at the Albright-Knox Art Center, Carnegie Art Center, the Kenan Center, the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site, Indire Gallery, and UB Center for the Arts. A few of the many art honors that Welch has achieved include: 2014 Artist Residency at Vermont Studio Center, inclusion in 2013 *Studio Visit* Magazine, in 2011 she had a painting accepted as an artist gift to the Burchfield Penney Art Center collection, 1st place in both the 2009 BSA Catalog Show and in 2009 BSA spring show and inclusion in 2008 NYFA - MARK Professional Practice Program.

Welch's love of art was inspired by her mom and her teachers. She always worked very hard in art class so she was encouraged by her high school and college art teachers to pursue art as a career. Ironically, she helped pass that love of art and inspiration to Mount Mercy's other art teacher.

"I have always loved art and I was inspired to pursue art as a career by my parents and by Jacqui Welch. Taking her courses in high school enhanced my love of and appreciation for art," Jennifer Hallinan Licata, a 2003 graduate of Mount Mercy Academy remarked. Licata has returned home to Mount Mercy Academy and has been a member of the art department for the past eight years, after spending two years teaching elementary level art. She possesses a Bachelor's Degree as well as a Masters Degree in Art Education. Licata also has an Art History Minor. Licata's art career is still in its beginning stages, but she has had work shown in the Daemen College and the Buffalo State College Galleries, as well as the Burchfield Penney Art and CEPA Galleries. She has had a painting win Best in Show in the painting category and has also earned a few honorable mentions.

Both teachers believe that the uniqueness of art helps to make it a meaningful and appreciated class for students. "Art promotes individuality, respect for different viewpoints and cultures, problem-solving, creativity, and a better work ethic. Art develops a student's confidence, sense of responsibility, acceptance of constructive criticism and collaborative skills," Welch remarked.

Licata stated "Art provides students with the opportunity to do something a little outside the box in a normal school day. Sculpting clay, mixing paint, and taking photographs gives students challenges in areas like visual-spatial skills, motor skills, decision-making, and inventiveness. This type of

hands on learning isn't always offered in other subjects." All of these reasons are evinced as true through the large numbers of students who enroll in the art electives at Mount Mercy.

Both teachers have specific parts of the teaching experience that they like the most. Licata commented, "My favorite part of teaching art is seeing how it affects my students. I love watching them learn to work through a problem and deal with frustrations as they experience new things. It's wonderful to see them *want* to come to class. For many of them, it's their favorite part of the day."

"My favorite part of teaching art is when students are discovering an artist they haven't heard of, are exploring an art material that is new to them, and when they have that "aha!" moment of getting a concept or technique that was challenging," Welch said. "This is what I enjoy most!"

Both teachers manage to find time to pursue their own art interests during their free time. Welch creates and exhibits drawings and paintings in oils, her favorite medium. Her particular interest at this time is showing the relationship between humans and dogs, particularly between humans and service dogs. Welch also loves to draw in charcoal pencil. Licata spends her free time exercising her passion for learning about new areas of art. She spends the majority of her time on photography, particularly dark room work. She also gives private lessons and helps her friends with wedding design. Her favorite art medium is painting.

These two talented teachers have passed their talents and love of art onto their students. Mount Mercy students and graduates have won numerous awards, created murals, and have pursued many different art-related careers. Students have been accepted into the art programs at prestigious art schools like SCAD (Savannah College of Art and Design), FIT (Fashion Institute of Technology), and the Chicago Institute of Art.

A few of the many accomplishments of the Mount Mercy art students include: earning a portfolio art scholarship to Daemen College, 2nd place in the Congressional Art Show in Buffalo, art awards in the All-High Photo Show at Villa Maria College and in Art Alive at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, internships at the Buffalo Arts Studio, and acceptances into the Future Curators Program of the Albright-Knox Gallery and into the New York State Summer School of the Arts Program. Students have also created and painted murals at Bert's Bikes, Holy Family School and the Enlightenment Literacy Center at Dog Ears Bookstore.

Some of the art-related careers that Mount Mercy Alumnae have adopted include: establishment of the Indie Arts Festival in Buffalo; furniture design; baby and toddler clothes and accessory design for Hello Kitty; art therapy; student recruitment at Savannah College of Art & Design, and being part of the gallery staff at the Burchfield-Penney Art Museum. Several students are also passing on the benefits of art, as well as their love of art by teaching art.

The art department at Mount Mercy Academy, under the direction of Jacqueline Welch and Jennifer Licata continues to flourish. Both women are residents of Buffalo.

Picture cut-lines: Jennifer Licata and Jacqui Welch shaping and molding the artists of tomorrow  
Jacqui Welch assists freshman Mikayla Texido.



**Mount Mercy Academy**

A Catholic College Preparatory High School for Young Women  
88 Red Jacket Parkway | Buffalo, New York 14220 | [www.mtmercy.org](http://www.mtmercy.org) | T (716) 825-8796 | F (716) 825-0976