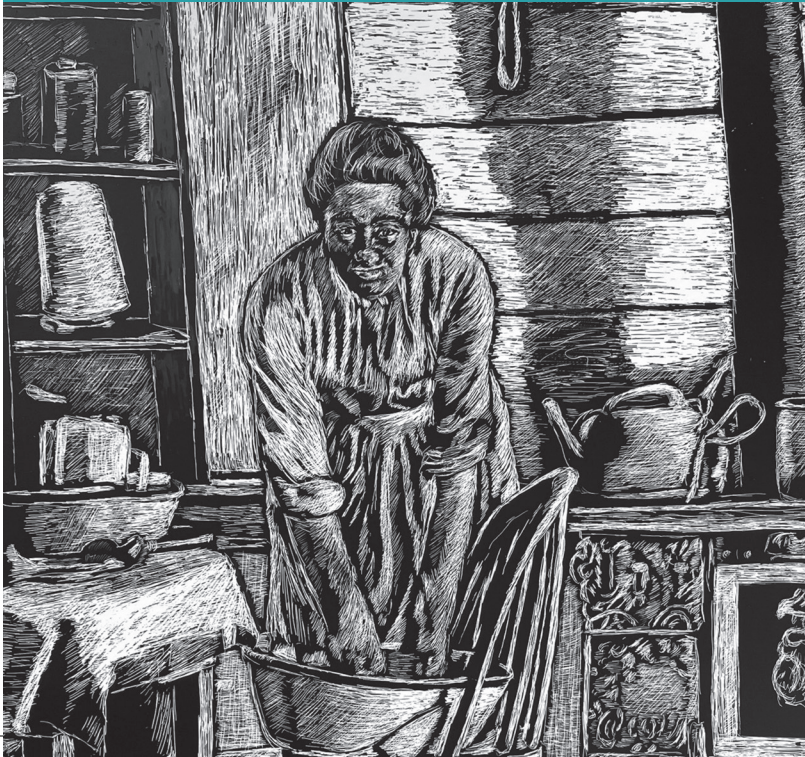


# The Many Mediums of Jimmie Marler

*Hartville artist's hands never rest*



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The world record for most prolific painter is held by Pablo Picasso, with over 13,000 paintings and designs to his name. Hartville native Jimmie Marler has produced around 11,500 at this point. And with Picasso dead for several decades now, Jimmie is working feverishly to catch up. “I’ll beat him,” he says assuredly. “I can’t stand somebody beating me in something.”

Around Wright County, it’s hard not to stumble across Jimmie’s artwork, whether a cafe, church or roadside mural. That’s to say nothing of his work in over a dozen museums, countless churches and the White House.

Jimmie is soft-spoken, but never let it be said he doesn’t have a competitive streak. Whether it’s photography, art, piloting or computers, if he isn’t the best at something, he’ll keep working at it until he is.

In grade school, Jimmie’s counselor told him he wouldn’t make it in college — an assessment that didn’t sit well with the ambitious young man. “You tell me I can’t do something, I’ll do it,” he says.

And he did multiple times. Whereas most would settle with one degree, Jimmie earned five, ranging from art to computer science. Each one he received, he sent back to his school in Kennett for his former counselor to see.

A College of the Ozarks career test told Jimmie he was cut out to be a teacher. His twin brother, Billie, was shocked, pointing to Jimmie’s naturally shy disposition. “Yours says ‘teacher?’” Jimmie recalls him asking incredulously. “You won’t talk!”

But Jimmie gave it a shot teaching middle school mathematics at Mountain Grove. Intimidated by the large classes and boisterous students, he swore off teaching, searching instead for employment in programming or engineering. After getting no bites, Jimmie received word that Norwood was looking for a math and art teacher. He was hesitant, but changed his mind after being assured that Norwood classes were small.

Jimmie’s education career lasted for 10 years at Hartville and 27 at Norwood. For a time, he taught seven classes simultaneously at Norwood, Drury University and Southwest Baptist University. Occasionally, he would teach computers, math or photography in surrounding towns. Schools that typically allowed their instructors to teach two classes assigned Jimmie four or five.

This tremendous workload, coupled with his artistic and photographic endeavors on the side, meant Jimmie

**Left:** Whether he’s using oil, pastels, pencils or charcoal, Hartville artist Jimmie Marler loves rendering scenes of everyday life from the world around him. **Above:** Among the thousands of pieces Jimmie has created, sold and exhibited he still holds on to his first oil painting.

would typically run on fewer than four hours of sleep nightly.

“I’d stay up late drawing, then be working my mind for the next day,” he says. “Some people would say I was under stress, but if you love it, it’s not a job.”

Jimmie even had the honor of being a finalist for the NASA Teacher in Space Project in 1985. The winning educator would become part of a crew that would fly into space aboard the shuttle Challenger.

Thankfully, Jimmie wasn’t chosen, as the Challenger exploded not long after liftoff, a historic event that shocked the nation.

He recalls watching the tragedy unfold live in his classroom, and can’t help but wonder if things would have played out differently had he been there. “Maybe I could have fixed (it),” he muses, “if it was a computer problem or something.”

What talent Jimmie is ultimately known for, of course, is his art. He learned the craft from his self-taught cousin, Johnny Jackson. While Johnny was mostly paralyzed, he could move his neck and hands, so Jimmie learned by his bedside as he painted governors, senators and other noteworthy figures.

While Jimmie has done abstract pieces, he prefers capturing the essence of real people in his art, typically from photographs as opposed to his imagination. Most of his art is done while watching TV. The faster the show moves, the faster he moves. Jimmie is ambidextrous, so if one of his hands gets tired, he simply switches to the other. At this point in his art career, Jimmie says he doesn’t have to think about what he’s putting on the canvas anymore, which he

attributes to God’s guiding hand. He has an affinity for religious drawings and paintings, having donated them to more than a hundred local churches and charities.

“It’s not me drawing,” he says. “It’s like God did it. He always tells me what color to pick up and where to put it.”

This summer, Jimmie is checking another item off his bucket list: becoming an international artist.

“Sharon (Jimmie’s late wife) and I visited the Louvre,” Jimmie recalls. “I told her, ‘Man, I’d love to have artwork in here.’”

Beginning in July, the PAKS Gallery in Vienna, Austria, will feature two of his pieces through the end of 2023. He’ll also be entering the Modern Art Masters in exhibition at the Carrousel du Louvre in Paris — yet another feather in the cap of an artist working to become the best.



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