

He couldn't fight it, so he tried it

She painted — now he

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does too

Share and share alike is the motto of many couples, whether in hobbies or aspirations. Take Tracey and Gary Cox, for example. The couple have been painting together since they met almost three years ago at a Port Credit Carnival and their hobby resulted in an exhibition of their oils, which ran from May 14 to June 8 at the Port Credit Library.

Tracey came away from their showing with very positive feelings and the couple received some valuable critiques. "A few friends from the OCA came and gave information. That's what I wanted, basically. If you don't have a teacher, it's hard to see areas yourself that you need improving on," she explains.

Tracey, 20, and Gary, 27, have been married for almost two years. When they first met, Tracey was an avid painter and Gary soon became fed up with her devotion to art. Tracey's attitude would seem to be "don't knock it until you've tried it," for she quickly handed Gary some painting materials and left him to his own devices. The result was that "within a year he was pretty good."

When Gary executed his first stroke on the canvas, Tracey recalls, "It was love at first sight. He couldn't keep it out of his hands," she says. Ever since his first painting, Gary has finished a picture in one sitting, whether it takes two or 12 hours.

ROMANTIC ART

Tracey's love for painting was sparked in high school when her mother used to buy copies of Rembrandts. "The beauty of them made me want to paint," she explains.

She took up the challenge of portrait painting and fell in love with painting people's eyes. "To me, that's the whole painting. Some paintings, if the eyes look alive in it, it makes you stare," she says.

She also started a love affair with the works and period of Thomas Gainsborough (1727-88).

Gainsborough was born in Suffolk, England, and lived during the Age of Reason. To the elegant society of 18th-century England, this was a time when extravagant displays of emotionalism and flamboyance in art were rejected.

Gainsborough was a rival of Sir Joshua Reynolds. He enjoyed a fresher and more unsophisticated style than Reynolds in his portrait painting.

"I love his work and I love everything to do with this classical era, including the costumes back then," says Tracey, adding that she would have enjoyed living in those times because they seemed romantic.

She enjoys the rich textures that oils evoke and works from photographs rather than a sitting subject. She's found that even the slightest movement in a subject can change the picture's shadows, and besides, she adds jokingly, "I've tried to get my husband to sit for me and it's impossible."

Husband Gary also paints in oils but prefers to do landscapes. "He loves the north country and everything to do with nature. It was the first thing that he wanted to paint," she says.

Unlike Tracey, Gary prefers to recall scenes from his memory and paint them, rather than taking photographs.

The two are painting basically for a hobby and their inspirations come sporadically. Both of them won't paint for a few months until the craving hits them, and then they'll make painting a daily habit. Although their inspirations don't come simultaneously, each serves as a muse to the other, Tracey says.

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One half of a couple, Tracy Cox shares her art with her husband Gary. Tracy got Gary hooked on painting and there's no stopping the two of them now.
(Staff photo by Fred Lock)