

Severna Park artist teaches students how to draw Barack Obama, other online lessons for Smithsonian amid coronavirus

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Jill Galloway artist instructor for National Portrait Gallery is offering online art lessons. (Courtesy Photo)

Jill Galloway is holding “virtual” Open Studio workshops free for the public to stay connected with the arts throughout the stay at home orders.

Galloway is an artist-educator for the [National Portrait Gallery](#), which is part of the Smithsonian Institution. She has been teaching at the Smithsonian for 11 years.

When the gallery shutdown, Galloway said the transition to online classes “seemed pretty natural,” since she also has been teaching art business classes online for years.

“It is really fun and nice because I can create the class here and just send it out there. Then as many people as they want to can see it,” Galloway said. “So I don’t need a studio space to cram 12 people, I can send it out to thousands.” Galloway believes teaching improves her personal art and feedback from students makes her a better artist.

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“I think that’s why a lot of artists are teachers, you learn when you teach,” Galloway said. “It is harder not to get feedback while teaching online.”

Also, while teaching online, Galloway doesn’t know who she is teaching so she tends to be broad with her approach.

“I have to back up and explain every little bit. Also, offer ways for people to take it a step or two further if they are more advanced,” Galloway said. “I have build lessons that can reach everyone and all skill levels. I am really being cautious to be sure that I am being simple.”

Galloway has been a full-time artist for 20 years and has been teaching throughout those years.

While quarantining in the house, Galloway said she hasn’t lacked any inspiration.

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“I think a big part of that is because I am part of the Smithsonian community,” Galloway said. “As an artist you need to fill (the) creative well, as much as you use creativity out of that well. The Smithsonian really gives back to me, just by being part of the bigger picture and all they have to offer.”

So far in the workshops, Galloway has worked on contour art, a President Barack Obama portrait, pop art and many more to come.

“I like to do these lessons because it is not usually what I would do in my studio,” Galloway said. “I love painting everything from food to people.”

Galloway was “unsure” when the first class went online that anyone would tune in or be interested. But, that was proven wrong when she had almost 2,000 views.

“It has been really fantastic, and I am hoping it can grow and grow,” Galloway said. “I try to be aware that people are home with kids and so they need something to do. So I am trying to wrap in other academics as well.”

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The [Barack Obama portrait](#) was drawn using a grid, so people can learn how to read a grid. Reading a grid is part of science, technology, engineering and math classes, which is why Galloway included that in her lesson.

If there is a continuous need for online art lessons, Galloway would be open to maintaining them.

Galloway’s Workshop series will be free online on [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#). Each workshop is between five to 10 minutes long. Galloway is making sure she is only using supplies that most people have in their home.

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