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## **Artist Statement**

I come from two different families, and my work reflects that. There are many paintings reflecting my views on divorce and worldly pleasures, as well as many of my sweet, smiling siblings and my dog. I love animals and I have a unique imagination, which comes out in my visual storytelling. I have experimented with every medium that I have had access to, but most of my work is two dimensional using either paints or drawing tools. I go through phases where one medium is my favorite for a period of time, and I will use only that medium until I am drawn to another. I only began making serious art a little over five years ago, but my portfolio is growing as I continue to be inspired.

## **Short Biography**

I met my mom when I was fifteen and was adopted at eighteen. A lot of my work reflects my views on family because I have been a part of two very different families. I love to tell stories through my work to evoke strong emotion from the viewers so that the viewers can feel what I felt when I experienced different things.

I love to experiment with different media. I can't remember a time before I started crafting and, at the time, I was using anything I could find. This usually resulted in toilet paper roll robots, 3-D construction paper figures, and yarn art, but now I work mostly in 2D mediums and have many successful works in acrylic and oil paint, watercolor, oil and chalk pastels, colored pencils, and even fabric. I have carved stone and wood and I spent two semesters studying ceramics both on the wheel and not. I can't say I have a favorite because I go through phases where I will use only one medium for a period of time and then I'll get inspired and switch to another.

I had art classes in high school growing up, I attended the Kansas City Art Institute for one semester, and I've studied art for almost three and a half years at Harding. I will be an art teacher after I complete my Masters in Education, and I will continue to work in the studio

throughout my career.

## Extended Biography

Before I was adopted, I was in a family that loved physical pleasures. The dad loved alcohol, the older sister loved drugs and alcohol, and they both, as well as the mom, loved sex. Relationships with them were toxic for the other four kids in the family who saw and heard more than we should have. They didn't care how these things affected us. The parents divorced when I was eleven and after continual fights over custody, they split the kids up, too, sending the youngest two with the mom and the older three with the dad. This damaged every relationship within the family. Each parent suffocated us with gifts in an attempt to buy our love, but didn't give us any of the attention we needed and deserved.

The family mocked my desire to know Christ and devalued me in my attempts to know him. I would get yelled at on Sunday mornings for waking the dad up so he could drive me to church, or on holidays when he had to change his plans or leave me out of them so I could worship. During a conversation with him when I was telling him that I value my morality, he told me, "I don't care if you have sex, just don't get pregnant." I started driving before I turned sixteen and spent most of my time at the First Baptist Church or with the friends I met there, most of them being women significantly older than me. My mom tells me now that she thinks this was my subconscious attempt at replacing the parents I had with ones that cared about who I was. In fact, when I was fifteen I took my first high school art class and that was where I met the mom replacement that stuck. She was the art teacher and she started giving me art assignments outside of class that helped me with my skills and built our relationship and, after I decided I was done going to First Baptist Church due to the changes and my lack of spiritual growth, she invited me to the Prairie Grove Church of Christ where she attended. She had deep, spiritual conversations with me and encouraged me to study and pray more than I ever had and, two years later, the March after I turned eighteen, I was baptized.

The father hated that my increased involvement in the church meant a decrease of involvement in the family. He became especially upset when I voiced that I no longer supported his relationship of six years with his girlfriend who, I told him, refused to make sacrifices for

him and that he neglected his children whenever she wanted him. The night before my high school graduation, he kicked me out over text. None of his family came to the graduation, and I haven't seen any of them, except him a few times in passing, since then.

I tried living with my biological mom for a month after I graduated, but it was impossible to mend a relationship that we hadn't had since I was a child. I moved in with the art teacher who had adopted a rescue dog not long after she and I met. After that, she became the mom I always wanted, even though it was hard. I had trust issues from my entire life up to that point, I had been betrayed by the father I stood beside after the divorce, and I still didn't know basic things like it's essential to brush your teeth and hair and shower every day. It's hard teaching a child to do those things, it's much harder to teach an eighteen year old. However, we pushed through and our friendship and mother-daughter relationship grew stronger because of it.

The fall after I graduated, I started college at the Kansas City Art Institute. This seemed like the best thing that could have happened, until I realized I hate art school. Prairie Grove is conservative and small as a whole, and Kansas City, Missouri is large and liberal. The art school had less than one thousand students, but was no less liberal than the rest of the city. Female students came to class wearing only a bra on their top half, teachers swore during lectures, my liberal arts class was all about being gay or transgender, and I actually heard the words spoken by a student, "God is dead." It was miserable. The "art" they were teaching was more "how to make the most absurd and shocking and slightly offensive pile of trash" than it was actual art. One student made a twenty foot phallus out of cardboard. So, as soon as the semester ended, I transferred.

My mom attended Harding and I knew I didn't want to try another art school or a public school, so we toured the campus in January. Harding was beautiful and covered in Christmas lights (which was shocking, especially compared to the one strand of lights that hung across one fence in front of KCAI). I told my mom after being there for a day that that was the first time in five months I hadn't heard the "F" word at school. I loved that we started the day with chapel, unlike KCAI's orientation explaining gender fluidity, and that I was welcomed with a hug by respectable professors whose office walls were covered in beautiful works of their personal art. I made my first friends since high school and we did things like bake cookies, watch movies, and

decorate club themed hairbows. It took me two years at Harding to find a church that I wanted to place membership at, but I met many wonderful and kind people along the way. When I finally chose one, it was Pineview in Pangburn, Arkansas. They have a van that picks up the students because it's a little far away, but their generosity spreads far. Ruth, one of the elderly widows, makes dinner at her house every Wednesday night with the help of two other widows, Jerri and Fern. They invite everyone at church and they insist the college students invite our friends which usually results in twenty or more people at dinner.

About the same time I found Pineview, my mom's friend Joannah introduced her to Lonnie, her friend who was an artist that was recently divorced. Lonnie had three kids, so when he and my mom got married, I became a big sister again, to more than just Lucy (the dog). Now, most of my art consists of my siblings, or as I affectionately call them, "my rottens," and my new, happy life. Though there are still hard days, I know that I'm standing on a firm foundation, I have a wonderful church family, I look to God now more than ever, I have a future that is hopeful, and I have a family I am so proud to be a part of.

## Cover Letter

04/30/2020

Prairie Grove School District  
801 Viney Grove Road  
Prairie Grove, AR, 72753

Dear Principal Brenda Clark,

It is with great anticipation I present you with my resume in hopes to take over the position of Prairie Grove's elementary school art teacher. With a bachelor's degree in fine arts as well as a minor in Spanish, you will see that I am more than qualified to teach the diversity of students that come through my classroom, should you allow me the opportunity to fill the position. In my resume, you will see that I am capable of teaching a wide variety of mediums and skill levels in order to grow the creative young minds that are so prevalent in our district.

As I am the daughter of an art teacher, I have spent many years in the classroom shadowing my mother, as well as many professional hours shadowing art teachers across the state which has given me plenty of insight into what works as far as managing a safe and controlled classroom as well as ensuring a fun and engaging experience for the students. With my spanish speaking skills, I will also be able to reach our growing hispanic population without the use of a paraprofessional, which will give the hispanic students a less distant education.

In closing, I thank you for your time and hope that we can engage in a more in-depth discussion of my qualifications which would benefit the art program.

Sincerely,

Kiersten Combs

## Resume

# Kiersten Combs

106 W. Bush St. Prairie Grove, AR, 72753 • (479) 262-4157 • kcombs@harding.edu •

Facebook: Kiersten Combs and @KMaurineFineArt • Instagram: @Actually\_its\_Kiersten

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## Skills

- Amateur Photographer
  - Organizing Things in a Space
  - Experienced in Most Painting and Drawing Mediums
  - Basics of Carving stone and wood
  - Basic Crocheting and Weaving
  - Speaking and Translating Spanish on an Intermediate Level
  - Basic Ceramics
  - Linoleum and Wood Printmaking
  - Writing Fonts
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## Education

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| Prairie Grove School District K-12                              | 2003-2016           |
| Kansas City Art Institute                                       | Fall 2016           |
| Harding University<br>Major: Fine Arts<br>Minor: Spanish        | 2017 - Spring 2020  |
| Harding University Graduate School<br>Education: Licensure K-12 | Fall 2020 - Current |

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## Achievements/Travel



Stayed a Month in Italy with Foreign Exchange Student - 2014

Scored 5 on AP Art Portfolio - 2016

Sophomore Portfolio Review: Showed 15 Original Works - 2018

Received the Harding University Art Department Scholarship for Sophomore Portfolio Review - 2018

Stayed a Week in Honduras on Mission Trip - 2017 and 2018

Sold nearly \$200 in works of art at Harding's Homecoming Art Sale - 2019

Senior Art Gallery: Displayed 40 Original Works - 2020

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## References

### Professional:

Marie Weir - Manager of Starbucks on Harding University Campus

- Cell: (501) 593-0049

- Job and Duration: Barista 2018-2020

- Made drinks, Worked Register, Brewed coffee, Restocked, Trained New Baristas

Joy Slayton - Stephens Dorm Mom

- Office: (501) 230-5735

- Email: Slayton@harding.edu

- Job and Duration: Residential Assistant 2018-2020

- Checked rooms at curfew, Hosted Hall Meetings, Contacted Deans and Parents, Health and Safety Cleanliness Checks, Worked Lobby Desk, Answered Lobby Phone, Fire and Tornado Drills

Steven Choate - Professor at Harding University

- Email: Schoate@harding.edu

- Job and Duration: Student of Art History and Painting 2017-2019

### Personal:

Tonia Scroggins - Member of Prairie Grove Church of Christ

- Cell: (501) 279-4372

- Relation and Duration: Friends 2015 - Present

Kenneth Thomas - Elder at Prairie Grove Church of Christ

- Cell: (479) 200-8701

- Relation and Duration: Friends 2015 - Present

## **Graduate School**

I will attend graduate school at the Harding University campus in Rogers, Arkansas beginning in the fall of 2020 to attain my Masters in Education.

## **Career Goals**

While I am working toward my Masters in Education, I will substitute teach in school districts in and around Prairie Grove to gain experience. After completing my Masters degree, I will either apply for a job teaching art in Northwest Arkansas, or I will apply for the Teach for America program where I will teach in a low income school in Arkansas for five years. If I choose the second route, I will decide after the five years whether to stay where I am or look for a permanent teaching job elsewhere. I have considered looking into teaching studio art at a university or becoming a full-time studio artist, but I do not have sure plans at this time.

## **Professional Goals**

Throughout my career, I intend to continue working as a studio artist. My short term goal is to continue and complete my "Musicals" series which will be a group of 18 x 24 inch works that are based on songs from the musicals I love, and will feature me as the main character. I intend to display this series in a public gallery when it is complete. My long term goal is to make a name for myself so that my work is known across America and sells because of my name, but to never lose sight of what art means to me; never lowering my standards for money. My small goal that I achieved my senior year at Harding was to sell a work to the art department, but my larger goal is to sell a work to Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art.

## Web Portfolio



