

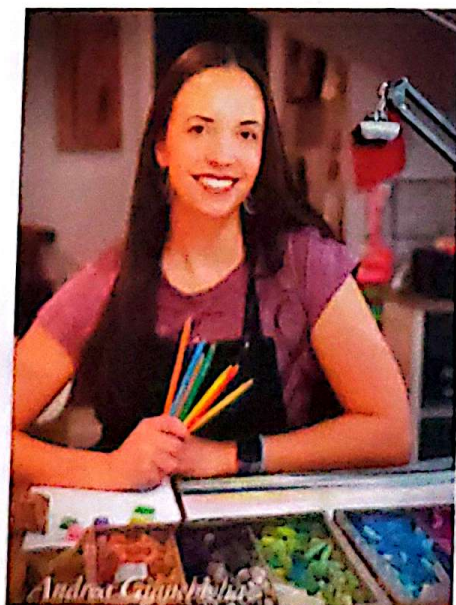
## When in Doubt, Add Purple

Discovering Color and Confidence with Artist Andrea Gianchiglia

By Sara Catherine Lichon

**W**hen in doubt, add purple. That's the motto of artist Andrea Gianchiglia, a Califon-based animal portraiture and landscape artist, art instructor, and (though not an official title), personal cheerleader. Andrea captures the soul of her subjects on canvas and sparks passion in the souls of her students, bringing light and color everywhere she goes and helping others find the confidence to create their own masterpieces.

Andrea has been drawn to both art and animals since her young journey began in Bedminster, New Jersey. "I've always drawn and painted," she said. "That's what kept me occupied growing up in rural Somerset County. I never took art classes... it was



more of a self-driven hobby. There was always an interest in animals. I grew up with dogs and cats, they were like my BFFs. I rode horses into my pre-teen years." Andrea also believes that her artistic nature and talents were inherited from her father, who passed when she was four years old. "He was apparently this creative entrepreneur," Andrea reminisced. "He was the cool guy who was artsy, so I think that came through in me."

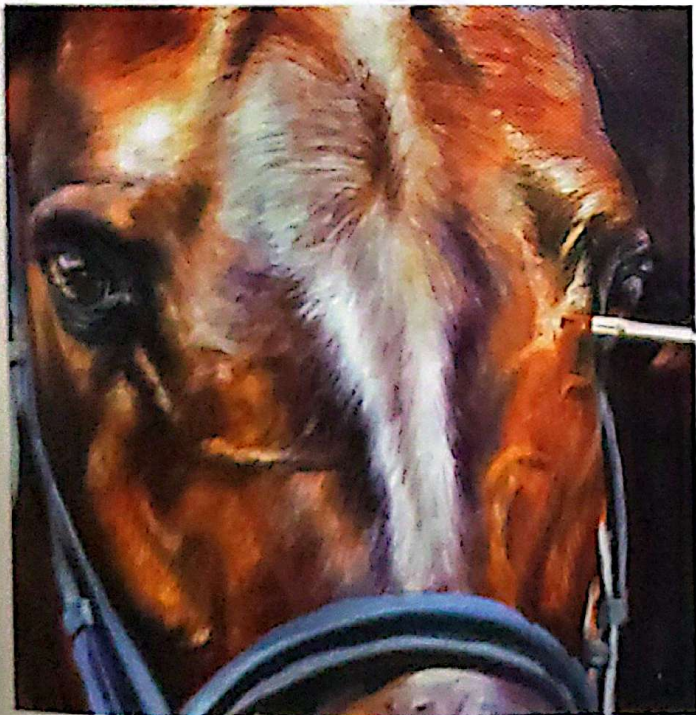
Andrea later refined her skills at Hartford Art School, where she was surrounded by other talented students, including her future husband, who drove her to push herself creatively and face her insecurities as an artist. "All these people were so good,

and here I am, what am I doing? I felt that sense of self-doubt," Andrea explained.

Working with oil paint and pastel, Andrea creates landscapes, and portraits of pets, horses, and cows, and looking at her artwork, it's hard to imagine she ever doubted herself. Her intricately detailed paintings look almost like photographs, each line and brush stroke creating realistic movement and soft fur, each color choice making lifelike shadows along her animals' faces. When you look into the eyes of her painted subjects, they sparkle with life, as though you're making eye-contact with a living being. "I'll start with a sketch, and then do an underpainting, whether it's in oil or pastel, which is a monochromatic version of the light and dark values of the subject," Andrea described. "From there, I will plop colors on it, still abiding by the values. After that, I'll layer in the details on top."

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Her cow paintings are Andrea's personal passion. Strong, stoic, yet gentle, they are like a mirror held up to many of our area's farms and she has a slightly different approach to perfectly capture the pastoral serenity many of us are used to as we drive through our Black River region. "I'll use bigger brushes, I'll be a little more expressive with it and not get too nitpicky about too many things. I try to be looser with that," said Andrea. The cow paintings are inspired by motherhood, and she's even involved her children in some of these pieces. "When I was pregnant with my first-born, I would drive past this one dairy farm every day. I felt this connection to the cows. The last show I had at Studio 7 in



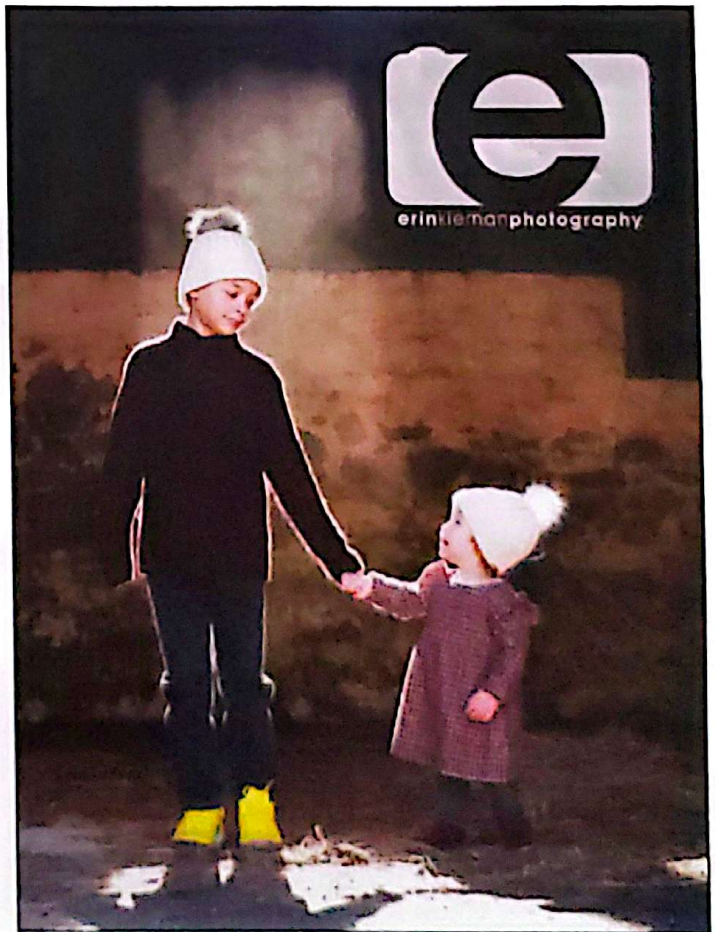
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*Andrea Gianbiglia mentors her class (while wearing purple)*

Bernardsville was called 'Upbringing,' and it was all cows and seascapes. The whole show was about motherhood and making sure that you're taking care of others, but you're also taking care of yourself. These two elements were just so reminiscent to me of what motherhood is. It's calming, it's cuddling, it's nurturing, and it's peaceful."

Andrea got her children involved in her latest cow series called *Calming the Chaos*. "I had my kids go to town on the canvas, and then I painted a mom and baby cow on top," Andrea explained. "It represents how the mom can nurture and calm between all the craziness that's in the world, in the household, in someone's brain."

When she's not painting, Andrea nurtures the artistic calling in others through her natural approach to art instruction. Her down-to-earth, fun, and experimental approach uses techniques broken down into accessible (and unique) easy-to-understand terms. "I'll say 'smoosh,' I'll say 'add some doodads,'" Andrea laughs. "I have a course called *Pastel Techniques* where I say, 'here's the circular smush, here's the swoop smush. Just squiggle it around.' I'm still teaching technique, just in a fun, silly way. I try to simplify things, showing that you can achieve detail and subtle nuances, you can get the intensity and movement without having to get really nitpicky."

Andrea finds joy in helping her students grow their confidence and face their fears. "A lot of people come to my class and they say, 'I've never done this before,' and

I get excited, I say, 'This is going to be amazing, it's going to be fun and wonderful.' It's more than being their instructor; it's being their friend and a mentor, and saying, 'You can do this!'"

Her confidence building instruction has branched out through her newest business venture – *Create & Inspire*, an online hub of art tutorials, where over the past few months, she's created her own website for her masterclasses and demos, and continues to livestream and record new classes weekly. "Every Monday I have an unedited, live-recorded virtual class," Andrea said. "Then there's the masterclass courses, which are more in-depth and edited." Along with classes, Andrea also offers a mentorship for college-bound students called *Creative Compass*, where she coaches students who are preparing for art school. Andrea is also leading her first retreat to Italy in June, where students will stay at a villa, explore, and partake in

plein air sessions.

Andrea's vision, whether you're just starting your journey or you're an experienced artist, is to make art accessible and empower everyone with the confidence and excitement to express themselves without hesitancy or the fear of not being good enough, which is a normal, healthy feeling that can be transformed and overcome. And if you're having feelings of self-doubt, it's okay, just add a little purple.

Visit Andrea at *Create & Inspire* ([www.createandinspire.art](http://www.createandinspire.art)) or one of her classes ([agillustration.com](http://agillustration.com)).



*Crayola Cows*