

The Clark Fork Valley Press
And The Paradise Center Present

Caelen McBride

Thompson Falls High School
Spotlight on the Arts – June 2022



“Spotlight on the Arts” by the Paradise Center honors and encourages students in the arts by highlighting their talent and acknowledging the support they receive through their schools and teachers.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Caelen McBride. McBride is 19 years old and has been a resident of Thompson Falls since kindergarten. He has just completed his senior year at Thompson Falls High School and was instructed in visual art by teacher Micah Grossberg.

When McBride was quite young, he found no interest in art, but as he became increasingly exposed to others doing it, especially other students at school, the inspiration to pursue art began to emerge. McBride brought numerous

folders and notebooks of his work to our visit. Each piece (of hundreds) demonstrated his developing skills in both painting and sketch work: faces, hands, animals, insects, intricate doodles, fantasy creatures, and a wide array of cartoon characters and storytelling graphics.

McBride dedicates his attention to a variety of visual art mediums including: painting with water color and acrylic; ceramics; pottery; and sketching with pencil.

Although working and experimenting with watercolors was his favorite medium, he discovered the field of stop animation - an art form that incorporates a multi-faceted understanding of numerous skills and techniques, such as: sketching to create storyboards; photography; understanding software for creating audio/visual productions; video editing; animation; set design; digital graphics; and modeling. He has been working with Stop Animation for the past eight years.

McBride shared several of his video creations. One was a 4 1/2 minute production, which took him two months to create. Each second of video contains up to 15 individual frames (15 different photos of carefully staged still sets) - overall, the video contains thousands of still shots spliced in a continuous flow of movement.

The video was a caricature animation containing numerous elements of special effects, sound effects, and dialogue. The dialogue of the characters was provided by recording voices of other online friends who collaborated with him. Using Lego characters and Lego building sets, McBride created an environment in which he unfolds an episode of the "Batman" - filled with lightning, a variety of shadows and fade techniques, several chase scenes that culminate into detailed battle exchanges - and amidst all the drama, there was also the inclusion of well executed comedic elements.

Considering a platform to share his work, McBride began to reach out to others of similar interest on the internet. He formed new friendships with creators from all over the continent. He discovered chat rooms, blogs, websites, and an artistic community of like-minded creators. There he developed connections through which he was able to communicate, critically assess, and exchange numerous ideas, helping him develop and refine his skills and techniques in short film creation.

Not only does he find others who are interested in helping with his project but finds himself invited to help with their projects as well: such as providing dialogue voice-overs and character voice impersonations (eg. Bugs Bunny). McBride eventually established his own YouTube channel called "Orbital Snapshots", which now features numerous examples of his stop animation creations.

McBride took time to elaborate his technique for creating effects such as fire, flashing, shadow, and even flying. Each step is painstakingly slow - and the variety of techniques to create such effects seems endless - but so too is his

enthusiasm and interest. It was apparent that McBride is both dedicated and patient with his creations. He sees his future work, not as an opportunity to “be better than”, but rather as a commitment to being his personal best - diving deep into the process that genuine expression and art demands - to be singularly authentic and find his “voice.”

Upon graduation, McBride is hoping to enter college level education pursuing areas in movie production, animation, and taking additional classes that focus on the various computer software programs and applications that he will need to further develop his skills.

He states, however, that this is a big step into a bigger world, and that he feels slightly nervous about the application process, since it will bring him to a new and unknown level of skill and demand.

McBride plans to investigate a variety of colleges, including the curriculum courses that each makes available.

He hopes that his future will develop financially gainful opportunities not only in video production, but also hard copy graphic novels (an extended format for cartoon illustration and storytelling). McBride is a gifted artist, illustrator, and animator, with a promising future in which there is so much more to “see” than to “say.”