

PRIDESOURCE



FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF **Between** THE **Lines**

Google Site Search



[HOME](#) [NEWS](#) [A & E](#) [GUIDES](#) [CALENDAR](#) [OPINIONS](#) [NEIGHBORHOODS](#)

IN THIS SECTION: [FEATURES](#) | [MUSIC](#) | [THEATER](#) | [A COUPLE OF GUYS](#) | [ADVICE](#) | [PUZZLES](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [BARS](#)



Breaking The Mold

BY ED ENGLISH

Originally printed 9/3/2015 (Issue 2336 - Between The Lines News)

Natural-born talents don't come more naturally than with digital painter and ceramicist Spencer Barefield. He's the son to a musically inclined father and artistically inclined mother, and by the age of 2 he was already learning how to play violin. Although not well, he admits.

"It didn't work for me," Barefield says with a laugh, but it did work for his sister, a professional violinist in New York.

Yet Barefield is still a musician of many sorts. He regularly practices piano and still gives the violin a try. But his instrument of choice is the soft hypnotic hum of the pottery wheel, using careful rhythm and coordination to create a ceramic symphony.

"When I think of my ceramic work and throwing on the wheel, it's a lot like playing an instrument that doesn't have sound," he says. "I feel like what I do with my hands on the wheel, I am capturing this kind of music and rhythm into a pottery piece but it is there forever."

This fall, Barefield, 28, will debut his pottery work to the public in a new joint business venture with his mom called Barefield ClayWorks.

"There is a delicate balance of the rhythm, flow and mechanical movements, while also incorporating the artistry and figuring out a shape that is pleasing to the eye and very aesthetic," Barefield says about creating art to be sold. He's been steadily working on a collection of pottery pieces

for the launch of the business from his in-home art studio. "And hopefully someone will look at it and say, 'Wow, I would like that in my home.'"

Barefield first fell in love with ceramics after being introduced to an artist working with the Empty Bowls Project -- an international movement to raise money to end hunger through the selling of artist-made bowls.

"I saw him and his apprentice making all these bowls so fast, one after the other. It was incredible," he remembers. "And so he let me sit down and throw on the wheel for the first time, and I made this bowl. It was clunky and thick," he laughs, "But I guess it ended up being sold for Empty Bowls. It was my first bowl ever made."

Inside his family home in Detroit's historic Palmer Park, the walls are adorned with an intricate collection of pottery and other handmade trinkets by Barefield that are a reminder of his progression as an artist.

"If I look at my stuff now compared to then, it's cool how that just inspired me to go from that first bowl," he says. "I feel like when I am throwing in the wheel, it is just a really meditative sort of thing where you put yourself in this deep state of concentration and you just kind of focus into this rhythm and flow."

Ceramics is where he concentrates but digital painting is where he dreams, says Barefield, drawing up his own themes inspired by artists such as Salvador Dali and Marc Chagall to create a style he calls "interstellar."

"The possibilities of what life could be like in different worlds and parallel universes," he explains. "I like to go into other universes in my works, to just paint things that don't look like our world at all; it's a kind of way to explore different realms."

He also uses digital painting to explore different parts of his identity. As he explains, his art is the formulation of all his environmental influences, including the LGBT community.

"I am sure if that is part of me as a person, perhaps some of that goes into my artwork somewhere. So it's the elements of imagination and things that influence me all around," he says, explaining he leaves the interpreting of his artwork to his audience. "I love hearing what people see in it because they can see something that I wouldn't have necessarily thought of myself." And he doesn't spend much time interpreting his identity as an artist.

"Using the word 'artist' would be what I would fit into, whether it is a very vague widespread term to cover a whole spectrum," he adds. As Barefield says, he just wants to inspire people to interpret their own levels of creativity.

"I would like my art to be able to move people in a way that would make them want to better their own creative selves and explore what they can do," he says. "When you look at my work, you can see whatever you want to see," and Barefield says he wants people to think just as creatively about themselves.

