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Welcome to Arc Studios News! This newsletter features events and activities of artists, nonprofit professionals and micro business owners that are part of the creative community at Arc Studios & Gallery 1246 Folsom Street San Francisco.



## Arc Studios News September 2020

**A Conversation with  
Joshua Coffy**  
Arc Studio #206  
By Sherri Cornett



When Joshua and I talked in 2018, we focused on his light-hearted and whimsical paintings. I wondered if world events of 2020 had affected a change in his approach to art. True to his upbeat nature, he has not only stayed true to his style, but he has added innovative new avenues to broaden exposure to his work.

**Sherri Cornett:** As we are talking, Covid continues to ravage the world. How has this crisis been for you?



**Joshua Coffy:** I am a high-risk person, so I was not leaving the house. It was scary at first. The paranoid Josh came out, which was not good for making art and most shows were cancelled. I had been teaching some group painting classes and tried to transition those to Zoom, but I never felt I was offering enough value to charge for them. Eventually though, I started going back to my studio - not every day, but 2-3 times a week. I also set up a small room in my garage for small works and digital drawing on my iPad. And, luckily, I had a couple of commissions that kept me going and there were still some paintings for sale on my website.

**SC:** I see you began offering coloring pages on your website.

**JC:** Yes. Last summer, my good friend Lisa, who lived in Reno, and I decided to create a coloring book from images of our paintings. Then she moved and Covid happened and our idea was indefinitely postponed. I decided to release some individual pages . . . as a gift to people who have supported me, to help them fight boredom while staying at home. I invited them to download, print and color the pages and share them on social media, and asked them to tag me.

**SC:** And I hear that Patreon has been very helpful? What is it and how did you learn about it?

**JC:** Patreon is a membership community that supports creatives. Some musician friends were having an even harder time than visual artists, because all they had were gigs, not much physical to sell. They told me that using Patreon gave folks choices, some freedom to pay and support them at whatever level they wanted. Then, about two years ago, I heard of some visual artists using Patreon, but I wasn't sure I could pull it off. Then a friend suggested that, because I had so many social media contacts who respond to my new works already, I should try it.

**SC:** So how does it work?

**JC:** Patreon handles sales, for which they get a transaction fee, and memberships. I set up membership scales with different gifts for each support level. Patreon does the billing for membership and sales and reminds me what art and gifts to send to whom and when. Originally, I thought it would be great if I came away with \$100/month . . . money I could put toward my studio rent. For six months now, I have had so many people joining my Patreon site at the \$10/month level and above that I am almost paying my whole studio rent! But, even the \$1/month members get something exciting from me.

**SC:** I am having flashbacks of a very labor-intensive Indiegogo campaign I did years ago . . .

**JC:** Ha! The trick is to figure out reasonable gift levels. It took me a while to figure out what I could do easily. For example, giving a person an original painting for \$100 worth of support is not efficient. I now spend one whole day a month producing the various gifts . . . stickers and magnets of my works, a handmade letter, an archival print-of-the-month, an end-of-the-year original drawing, and a monthly video of behind-the-scenes processes . . . for example, how I keep myself motivated . . . topics that, I hope, transcend to non-artists. And, it only took me one weekend to set it all up. Patreon enables an instant connection to Facebook and Instagram. In fact, I used social media to announce my Patreon site.

**SC:** How do you talk about this to your collectors?

**JC:** I have to say, I used to work in fundraising, so I already had the confidence and the language down and knew that people like to back winners. I am up front with them. I tell them this kind of support really helps me pay my bills. A big message is that they give me the power to win. And it would be really cool if they were on my team! And, they get cool stuff in return.

**SC:** Any pitfalls?

**JC:** Not really. It has been pretty seamless. There were a few folks who didn't want to be part of the site . . . they wanted to do it via Paypal, with me invoicing them each month. But, I had to tell them "no." It is definitely worth having Patreon handle the administrative parts.

**SC:** Is there anything else you have recently added to your art production?

**JC:** I was thinking about how we are all having a hard time with Covid - what could I/we do that is cool. So, I started an "acts of kindness" project where I make prints of my drawings and put them in unusual places around town - park benches, hardware stores. I put hints to the locations up on social media. I include a note, asking people to take the art, give it a home, that I am a local artist, look me up, send me a letter about what you did with the art. It feels good. And, I have been accepted to two new shows. So, that is good news!

Joshua's website: <https://undersong.com/>

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