



Reflections from Alumnus Michael Fratangelo ('01 B.F.A) on His Time at SoVA and His Creative Process

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I started down the path to be a painter in the fall of 2000, in John Bowman's Beginning Oil painting class. I had no intentions of pursuing art as a career, but lightning struck in his class. Professors pulled me aside, asking, "Is that what you really see? You really have something." I knew I had found my calling.

I am a firm believer in Joseph Campbell's idea that you should follow your bliss. I knew I had found my bliss with painting so I had no choice but to follow that path. People often ask me how one becomes an artist. I don't think this is possible; you either are an artist or you are not. If you are, as Picasso said, you work out of necessity. You truly have no choice, and if you don't, you will suffer. It is often a cross to bear.

I am so grateful that I went to Penn State, because at Penn State you can venture into different career paths. Where you start out may not be where you end up. I

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believe having endless possibilities is absolutely crucial to young adults finding their way.

I cannot speak highly enough of the creative and innovative art school atmosphere that is available at SoVA. I was largely shaped by the teaching artists John Bowman and Ann Shostrom, who mentored me.

After graduating from Penn State, I did a series of topical shows, including a series documenting the "War in Iraq," which was juried into the 2005 Florence Biennale.

Currently, I focus on commissioned portraits. My portraits are unique; I have never found anyone doing anything similar in the art world. Each work is a quest to puncture through the visible reality into the deeper mystical realm. The colors and shapes in my portraits tell the story of the spiritual essence of the people.†

My process is this: I first interview my subjects to create a reference for the work. I ask them about their mentors, life-shaping events, favorite music, food, clothing, seasons, and time of day. I then ask for 3-5 photos of them. I then enter the studio and do a series of sketches from these photos and interviews, before starting on the canvas. Depending on the size of the portrait, it usually takes about four months to complete.

People often ask me how I come up with the imagery in my work. I explain to them that I have come to understand my painting as a gift. It is guided painting? they just come through me. My work can be found at [†fratangelo.com](http://fratangelo.com). (http://lm.facebook.com/l.php?u=http%3A%2F%2Ffratangelo.com%2F&h=ATMroafw0AP2j-8NWpskq8iA6IKYD4scjuGAhUxPODWgZapOyFo40sChrI_SX3QPsBi4NqHGoY4DR-JzGpY3jWuEWg_-kXGgVeHg1K0e_Muyi-eaW2MoLQmOq7NZZ8RanwRQuaMfmu5xDw&s=1)

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