



Young man goes back to drawing board

Adam Mc Lean, Staff Writer

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One of Andrew Mok's first memories of when he was a little boy is drawing.

He remembers the simple act of putting a pen to paper and letting his imagination pour out through the ink. He remembers creating an action scene featuring nine ninja turtle characters, dancing across the page, performing various ninja moves.

Mr. Mok, 24, reckons he was about three years old during this first foray into the world of artistic expression.

Twenty-one years later, you will still find Mr. Mok putting pen to paper, sitting in coffee shops, parks and malls, no longer sketching jumping and flipping ninja turtles, but instead sketching and capturing people in various settings as they pass in and out of Mr. Mok's multi-paged world.

A visual and creative arts student at Sheridan College in Oakville, the Richmond Hill resident has taken a round-about way over the last two decades to reach his current position as an art student and freelance artist for hire.

After all, it is not every day you meet an art student whose resume also features a degree in life sciences.



STAFF PHOTO/BILL ROBERTS After studying computer engineering and computer science, Andrew Mok made an abrupt right-turn back to the drawing board when other students encouraged his artistic talents and asked why he wasn't studying art.

"I made a huge 180 turn at McMaster University," Mr. Mok explained.

"I studied computer engineering for two years and I was extremely unmotivated. I switched to computer science and that was even worse, then I switched to life sciences and finished my degree, but it was in my second last year at Mac that I started drawing seriously again and all my friends at university would see my work and ask why I wasn't in art school".

"I began to ask myself the same question," he added.

And now the Sheridan College student has returned to a path he started with his kindergarten sketches of his heroes in a half shell 20 years ago with a serious and matured vision to make it his career.

"From that first drawing, I would just always sketch in my spare time. During family dinners I would sketch on napkins or if I had some time to kill on a bus ride, I would sketch passengers in my book," Mr. Mok said.

He calls the various cafes and coffee shops around town his studios away from home and the artist shivers to think how much cash he has sunk to the bottom of many coffee cups.

But, the hours of scratching and etching features, while sipping cups of 'joe' is a necessity for Mr. Mok; it is his best way to practise and fine tune his skills, which he uses not only a student, but an entrepreneur to boot.

He specializes in caricature artwork and his new website features some of his finer creations.

From celebrity paintings to real life sketches, albeit some with exaggerated features, browsers are able to get a sense of Mr. Mok's illustration and business talents.

He spent last summer earning money for school by working as a caricaturist at Canada's Wonderland, drawing at various local fairs and festivals and also offering his services as a freelance illustrator.

"It was an interesting experience," said the Langstaff Secondary School graduate.

"But most of all, this summer granted me some valuable insight in to the industry," he added.

With his website up and running he began to receive inquiries and was hired to produce a caricature of a couple for their wedding, which would be on display and their guests would sign.

Just like that Mr. Mok had gone from unsatisfied life sciences graduate who enjoyed sketching to professional illustrator and live caricaturist for hire.

Alia Morshedi-Gauthier was the first client and the subject bride-to-be.

"All of our guests thought it was a brilliant idea and they really enjoyed the work Andrew did."

"At first I was a little surprised at how young he is, but he was really professional and he is a great artist. He did a really good job," she added.

And now that he has dipped his pencil in to the business side of the sketch book, Mr. Mok is looking to take his coffee shop stylings international.

"The website is my way to get my name out there and I am going to be sending examples of my work to different companies and introduce the industry to my style," he said.

"Editorials, greeting cards, postcards, as a part of a studio or freelance, it doesn't really matter. Just as long as I am doing what I love.

"Creating art this way can be therapeutic, but most importantly it fulfills a sense of purpose and knowing that this is what I should be doing," he added.

After he earns his diploma, Mr. Mok is planning to enroll in a two-year computer animation course.

To view his work, you can visit www.andrewmok.ca