



MY LIFE STUDIO: TURNING MEMORIES INTO ART

By Victoria Keenan

More often than not, finding the right art for one's home has become about making a visual statement. We might like a piece for its ability to add depth to our living room or its color or size—but most of the art we choose offers little in the way of sentimental value. What if you could have something that was inherently you? Michael Malizia, owner of Hoboken's My Life Studio, creates beautiful custom artwork by reusing your materials, whether it be an old ticket stub, photos, articles of clothing or your child's favorite baby blanket. We visited Malizia at his studio and watched as he explained the process of his family-oriented art, and how he got to where he is today.

Malizia always considered himself an artist. With a college degree in design, he started working in architecture before moving on to the business side of things. Soon after, Malizia found himself working in finance, and went from trading stocks to even owning his own brokerage firm based out of New York City and London. At the time, he was focused on the family he had to take care of. As much as he enjoyed building a business, the hours away from his wife, Erin, and their two daughters were long and Malizia missed his longtime passion.

During this time, Malizia started creating his unique art, the first piece being with his daughter Charlie when she was three. "It wasn't meant to be a business, she just did some splatter paint and picked the colors, I did everything on an old curtain," Malizia explained, pointing to his first original piece. "I started doing more and more things like that, and as Charlie started evolving as a little person and started accumulating more things, I started incorporating them into my art. It would be a mixed mash of stuff and it was just fun. Charlie and the different materials were the true inspiration."

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As Malizia continued, people started inquiring about pieces for themselves. So Malizia took it up as a hobby and though it was mostly for friends and family, it began taking over nearly 20 hours of his week. Though art can be a slow moving business, partially because the pieces need to be made, Malizia started commissioning work and as he did, more and more people starting asking about his own art, which “was a really cool feeling,” he said with a smile.

Not long after, his wife bought him studio time at the Monroe Center and said, “you’re going there every Saturday for four hours and painting--and that’s it,” Malizia said, laughing. “I was like, ‘no, I’m crazy to think I could make a living as an artist.’ It’s tough to take that leap of faith, even when your family is so supportive. I starting doing more, saw the opportunity, and got out of business. It was the best thing I ever did. Now I’m two blocks from my house, see my kids every morning and meet them at lunch on the playground. Everything about the move is rewarding and it’s just a better quality of life.”

Since then, his own art has completely shifted and evolved, and when someone comes in for a commissioned piece, Malizia starts out by reading

what the people want, and what they want him work with and recreate. “The first step is to talk to someone and ask questions. What are they looking for? A lot of times people will say they want to do something with their own materials and make a really cool image of their children, or them and their spouse. It doesn’t have to be their belongings, that’s just one aspect of it, but if that’s the case, I’m like ‘hey, empty your nightstand drawer with all that stuff that you never want to throw out, purge it, put it in this box and we’ll make it into a piece of fine art.’ It serves better as a memory on your wall then it does in a box that you’ll only look at every five years.”

Depending on what people are looking for, whether it be a portrait or a precious moment in life, Malizia plans the kind of materials to use, from the colors to the palette. Using watercolor, acrylics, hand dyed silks, pastiche, collages, stenciling, oils, spray paints, portraiture to create or recreate an image, Malizia tries to capture the spirit of the people, who can be as involved or uninvolved as they want to be. “Materials themselves have a story, instead of just going to a store and picking out a picture, it’s in your home because it’s you.”

**My Life Studio is located at 300 Observer Highway.*

