

## a look into her sketchbook

Gwynnie's drawings and reference photos displayed on her website



# sketching her own path

Junior Gwynnie Hockey turned dog sketches into a side business, planning to keep art as a lifelong hobby

story by AVNI BANSAL

### TEN-SEVENTH-GRADER

Gwynnie Hockey's fingers were stained black. Using charcoal, she had drawn a small, sketchbook-sized portrait of her black, fluffy dog, Nate, in her grandmother's home art studio in London.

The drawing of Nate still hangs on Gwynnie's grandmother, Fiona Evans' wall — a favorite of Fiona's for how clearly it captures Nate's slightly quizzical expression.

Four years and 25 dog drawings after that first portrait, now-junior Gwynnie still spends around three hours a week creating art with colored pencils and watercolors. She doesn't have a surgical-room-turned-art-studio like her retired dentist grandmother, but instead works from her bed — covered in eraser shavings — sketching in her green 5.5-by-8.5-inch notebook.

Not only does Gwynnie continue creating art for her family, but she also sells custom \$50 colored pencil dog portraits and \$15 watercolor pieces. Most customers come through family friends — or friends of friends of friends.

"I gave my aunt a drawing of her dog as a gift after I made the one for my grandmother," Gwynnie said. "My aunt was like, 'People could pay you for this. Not me, though.' Then she told all her friends in her small town in Wales,

[United Kingdom], and then they started being like, 'Oh, I'll pay you to draw my dog.'"

That summer, Gwynnie sold three dog portraits in London, earning 30 pounds, around \$40, for each drawing, even completing one in the U.S. and shipping it to England.

Each dog portrait takes around four hours to complete. Shows like "Dexter" and "Gilmore Girls" — series she has already seen — run in the background so she can focus on the artwork rather than the screen.

"I get up a lot, and I'll come back to [a drawing] over a week," Gwynnie said. "I could speed up how long it takes, but I'm in this focus zone when I'm working, so there's no reason to."

Gwynnie doesn't think she has a formal "process," but there is a method to creating her dog portraits. First comes the photo. Or, more accurately, photos.

"If you give me a bad photo, it's gonna be a bad drawing," Gwynnie said. "I have to ask for like 50 different photos so I can get the perfect shot with the right angle."

Then comes a blocky pencil outline, no details. From there, she starts at the nose, drawing "radically" with her Prismacolor colored pencils, working

outward and finishing with the body.

"The body is always the hardest part because [drawing] a lot of fur concentrated in one place is really hard with pencils," Gwynnie said. "Usually, I cut it off at the end of the body, so it looks cleaner. People want the full picture, but it always looks better when I don't do the full photo."

Although Gwynnie specializes in dog portraits, she can draw practically anything. Her mother, Anna, has Gwynnie's hand-drawn portraits of actors Michael C. Hall — the main protagonist in "Dexter" — and Leonardo DiCaprio in her office. Gwynnie's older sister has watercolor jellyfish decorating the walls of her college dorm.

Gwynnie's father scans and saves each drawing, posting some on his Instagram. He also helps her upload art to her website, gwyneth.hockey, a domain he grabbed when she was born.

While Gwynnie's hobby has sometimes interfered with school — she once went two weeks in eighth grade without turning in a math assignment — Anna sees art helping Gwynnie's academics more than hurting.

"In English or history, there's an element of art that goes with it," Anna said. "When you're good at art, it

enhances your answers and thinking."

Fiona sees Gwynnie's personality reflected in her artwork.

"She's very kind and shares her drawings, and I share mine," Fiona said. "I'm not talented like Gwynnie, but she isn't rude about them, which is very kind. I think that's Gwynnie's character — she's interested in things, she notices things. I suppose it's all about seeing, isn't it? With art, you've got to see it to draw it."

Fiona hopes Gwynnie can focus on the enjoyment she gets from drawing — "doing it when she feels like doing it" — rather than feeling the pressure that comes with commissions.

Gwynnie agrees.

If her future job included art in some way, it would be "the perfect scenario." But she'd enjoy keeping art as a hobby, not a profession.

"I feel like [for] a lot of people who have that talent for art, that's the main thing that they do," Gwynnie said. "So having it as something I can do, but I don't focus on, gives me confidence."

One day, Gwynnie would like to have her own art studio — a place to spend her free time, just like her grandmother's. But she'd stick to colored pencils and skip the charcoal-stained fingers.



link to her website

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**GWYNNIE HOCKEY**  
JUNIOR