

## My Big Art Show by Justin McGonigle

Little did I know, that one by one, some of my dreams would come true.

I became a full time artist in my early 20's, after my time in the South and after living in another big city for almost a year. I asked my parents if I could live with them and see if I could be successful as an artist.

At the same time, there was an Art Gallery opening up in my big city home, called Gallery Q. It was made up of people similar to me: creative with a need for direction and involvement.

At Gallery Q I shined. At my first group show, I was called a genius and a great artist. My heart soared like an eagle. I felt as if I had finally arrived. I was now officially an artist!

Shortly after, I was planning to move to the Art Capitol of the World, New York City, when the phone rang. God had other plans for me. What I didn't know then, was that my future was on the other end.

The phone call was for an interview for a position, I had applied for earlier, to work as a First Person Interpreter at a 17th Century Living History Museum. I had visited the museum earlier and fell in love with it and thought that it would be something I would enjoy. Here was my chance and I took it.

I got the job. I was 25. I worked there for 7 years. There, I met the woman that would become my wife ( she worked in the Wardrobe Department). We were married 2 years later and our daughter was born 2 years after that.

What I did the entire time I traveled from place to place was make art. I never stopped. I would occasionally sell art or have my art in a fancy store or be part of a show; it's what I did and I loved it!

A few years into my family life, I rekindled my relationship with Gallery Q ( it had been 6 or 7 years since my debut there). I would soon be part of a 3 person show. I couldn't wait. By then, my work was strong and well received. I was confident that my group show would be a big hit.

The night of the show was electric. All night I was treated like a star. My reception at the show couldn't have been better. Lots of people came up to speak with me, including old friends. I also had some interest from a patron who wanted to purchase some of my work. I still have the painting he wanted to buy. It was out of his price range. It's one of my best.

I still live this way. I'm 57 now (2026). At one point in my 30's, I did go to College. I received my Associates Degree in Web Design and Media Arts. I worked in the business casual world as a Web/Graphic Designer for 10 years. I cashed out after 10 years and brought my daughter to Europe. 5 Countries in 20 days. We went there in 2016. It was amazing!

What I didn't plan for, was that, a year later, my past would catch up with me and I would find myself leveled. I never dealt with my past problems and I was carrying them around with me wherever I went. It affected everything I did and often with poor results.

I would soon find myself at the bottom of the sea of life. I had a nervous breakdown. In the end, singing is what finally saved me.