

Student Artist Draws a Fine Line

FOR 2016 JAZZFEST POSTER

Tri-C's Marissa Kest begins with fine art and ends with graphic design



Marissa Kest

Marissa Kest is no stranger to art.

“I have been making art since I was old enough to hold a crayon,” Kest said.

By 16, she was taking freelance jobs that she landed by networking with friends and family. She did designs for the Cleveland Metroparks and earned college credit for design classes she took while a student at Mayfield High School.

This year, at age 23, Kest designed the official poster for the 37th annual Tri-C JazzFest, presented by KeyBank. The poster features an abstracted image of the Playhouse Square chandelier, with visual cues that nod to music.

“I like making the jump from fine art and turning it into graphic design,” said Kest, who is studying graphic design at Tri-C's Western Campus. “I was going to do stained glass and Tri-C JazzFest and have all connected images in between. And I sort of took

the chandelier idea and I drew half a chandelier and thought it was boring. So, I made a subtle chandelier shape, and I filled it with art and jazz music and references to downtown Cleveland . . . It ended up going along the lines of jazzy and art nouveau.

“It changed a lot, but that's graphic design.”

She said that her design was initially criticized for not being obvious enough, for the chandelier being difficult to recognize.

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— Marissa Kest

“I never like to assume my audience is stupid,” she said. “You’re supposed to look at it. It’s not supposed to be drawn out for you.”

Kest seeks inspiration in nature, taking long walks with sketchbook in hand. She said she likes the design process, taking art from her sketchbooks and transforming it into graphic designs she can share.

Kest bartends to help pay for school and invents drinks to keep things interesting. Often, she will develop ads for the drinks, making her boss happy. She commutes 45 minutes each way from her Mayfield Heights abode to attend classes, but it’s worth it, she said, citing the quality of the program and labs at the Western Campus, the way that it has helped her build her portfolio and the attention she gets from her instructors. She said she wouldn’t mind retaking some classes at Tri-C that she has taken elsewhere.

Kest is on track to graduate this fall. She said she would love to work as a freelance designer. She is now illustrating a commercial guide to playing piano and creating a brand identity for a startup. She added, however, that she recognizes the benefits a regular paycheck can provide.

One thing is certain.

“I’m branching out beyond friends and family,” Kest said.

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