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Art hobby pays off for Okafor

By Rachel Barry
THE BATTALION

When Emmanuel Okafor Jr. was seven, he folded under peer pressure.

His weakness at the time has created a skill that lead him to being awarded the Best of Show at Art Fest '96.

Okafor, a sophomore environmental design major, said it was his friends' ability to draw that made him want to try his hand at art.

"All of them could draw, and I was one of the few who couldn't, and I wanted to fit in," he said. "After a while, I got good. I just kept practicing. Finally, it came to a point where it actually became a part of me."

He was in the library of his high school when his future art teacher approached him and suggested he enroll in his art class. It was his influence, Okafor said, that started him working with pastels.

"From the first day, he started working with me and pushing me," he said. "If it wasn't for him, I would have never tried pastels."

Okafor's pastel drawing, "Mama Africa," was awarded Best of Show at Art Fest. Dark greens and rich browns frame the face of the woman who Okafor says was inspired by a book he was reading about racial tensions in South Africa.

Okafor said the eyes are the key to his drawings, which are usually of people.

"I try to put a lot of emotion into my art," he said. "The eyes are what I think set my paintings apart from the rest of the paintings."

Although some artists are out to get a message across to the audience, Okafor said he doesn't begin a painting with a specific message in mind for viewers.

"People can read into it whatever they want to," he said. "I just want them to look at it and let the painting give them the message. I don't set out to put a certain message into it."

Okafor said he just sits down and begins to draw with no plan in mind.

"Sometimes I am surprised by what I do," he said. "My main goal is just to draw and whatever comes out, or however it ends up — I like it."

Okafor, who said spent he more than half of each day last summer drawing, described the process of creating one of his pieces of art as being something out of this world.

"It's relaxing and exciting," he said.

"Nothing bothers you. It's like you're not on this earth. Your mind is focused on your work, and nothing around you really affects you."

Okafor said he wants to make the best of his talent and use it to better himself.

"Through art, I have really matured," he said. "It has taught me a lot of patience. If it's not done right, I work with it. If it's not going right, I am more patient. I keep trying."

Okafor's patience paved the way to his drawing being selected as Best of Show in Art Fest '96.

Sponsored by the MSC Visual Arts Committee, Art Fest is an opportunity for students to enter their art into a competition in which the winners are displayed in the MSC Visual Arts Gallery.

Okafor said he was looking for a way to have his work displayed when he was told about the Art Fest.

"My main goal was just to get more people interested in my work," he said. "So I figured, 'Why not give it a try.'"

Katie Fox, one of the judges and a graphic artist at the Bryan-College Station Eagle, said that since A&M doesn't have a strong art program, Art Fest gives students a chance to be introduced to art they normally would not have been able to see.

She said student artists can learn a lot from the experience of the competition.

"It's a good way to get your art critiqued and let others see what is considered good art," she said.

Lalaine Little, adviser for the Visual Arts Committee, said there were 72 entries in the competition.

"People who come here don't have an opportunity to show how creative they can be," she said. "When they enter the competition and attend the reception, they meet other people who do the same thing they do. It's almost like they find a kindred spirit at the school that they didn't know existed before."

Now that the competition is over, Okafor said he has no intention of putting his pencils or pastels down and leaving art.

He said because this kind of art is not included in his major studies, he has tried cutting back on his drawing to concentrate on studying, but to no avail.

"I would find myself just picking up a pen and sketching something," he said. "I can never get rid of art. I'll always find time to do it."

INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Tonight at 8:00 p.m. in Reed McDonald 003.

All applicants are welcome to come talk to editors about interviews and applications.

SUMMER / FALL 1996 APPLICATION DUE FRI., APRIL 19 BY 3 P.M.

Circle semester(s) for which you are applying

THE BATTALION

013 Reed McDonald Building • Telephone: (409) 845-3313 • Fax: (409) 845-2647

☆☆☆ STAFF APPLICATION ☆☆☆

Name: _____	Number of hours you will take in summer / fall: _____
Phone number(s): _____	Expected graduation (semester): _____
Major: _____	a. If you have another job, what is it?: _____
Classification: _____	b. How many work hours per week? _____
	c. Will you keep it if hired? _____

PLACE A CHECK BESIDE THE POSITION(S) YOU ARE APPLYING FOR.

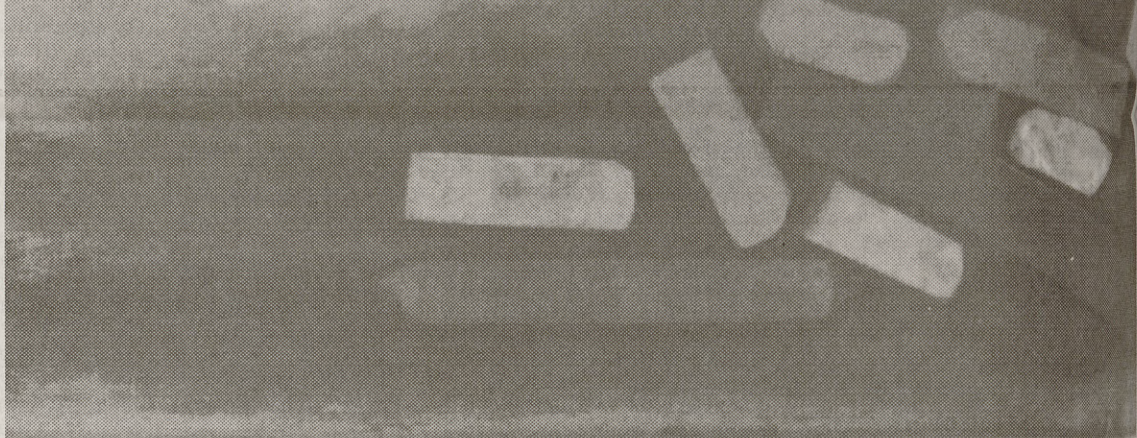
IF APPLYING FOR MORE THAN ONE POSITION, THEN NUMBER THEM IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE.

Battalion positions are listed under their respective desks. Below the position is a brief description of what the job entails ...

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| SPORTS DESK
____ SPORTSWRITER
Sports stories
Feature stories
Columns | AGGIELIFE DESK
____ WRITER
Entertainment stories
Feature stories
Movie/Music Reviews | OPINION DESK
____ COLUMNIST
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Column writing | CITY DESK
____ REPORTER
Front page news
Other news stories
Feature stories |
| NIGHT NEWS DESK
____ COPY EDITOR
Editing all stories | ____ PAGE DESIGNER
Aggielife page design | PHOTO DESK
____ PHOTOGRAPHER
Feature pictures
News and sports photos
Picture developing |
| ____ PAGE DESIGNER
Editing news stories
Designing news pages | VISUALIZATION ARTS DESK
____ STRIP CARTOONIST
Daily cartoon production | ALL POSITIONS ARE PAID |
| RADIO DESK
____ STAFF
Prepare news for show
Participate in radio talk show | ____ EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
Cartoon design for all sections | |
| | ____ GRAPHIC ARTIST
Graphic elements, design | |
| | ____ WEB PAGE DESIGNER
Web page design | |

- Please answer the following questions.
1. Why do you want to work at The Battalion; what do you hope to accomplish?
 2. What qualifies you for the position(s) for which you are applying? List any work, class, campus or other experience, along with anything else you want us to know about your abilities, goals and interests.
 3. Critique the section(s), i.e. Opinion, Photo, in The Battalion for which you are applying. What do you like, what could be better, what could be changed, what do you think is bad?
 4. Please list your extracurricular activities.
 5. Please attach samples of your writing, designs or photos. Submissions can include papers, short stories or anything you think might display your talents.

The Battalion is an equal opportunity employer and is committed to diversity. All A&M students are encouraged to apply regardless of age, gender, race or sexual orientation.



Attention Aggie Parents!!
Bring your kids to Kinder Fest!!
Saturday, April 20th,
10:00am to 5:00pm
at Sue Haswell Park in Bryan!

The theme this year is "Kinder Fest At the Movies."
This free event will feature children's games, activities, entertainment, community awareness organizations, arts & crafts, strolling characters, clowns, demonstrations, pool activities, vendors, concessions, and more!

Also, a free trip to Disney World will be given away to one lucky family!

Brought to you by the Bryan Parks & Recreation Department and the TAMU "Community Recreation" Course.

1997 AGGIELAND

Applications Available Now!!!

Editorial Board applications due by 5 p.m. Friday, April 19
General Staff applications due by 5 p.m. Friday, April 26

Positions Available:

Writer/Reporter Designers Photographers

Pick up applications in 012 Reed McDonald