

November 22, 2009

## Give him 15 minutes, and Mendham artist will paint your masterpiece

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CHESTER — David Ohlerking's jeans and brown work boots are perpetually splattered with paint.

As is the blue tarp laid on Perry Street next to the Le Reve Gallery just off Main Street.

The 14 jars of oil paint he keeps hipside on a table next to him all have their own brush, as Ohlerking doesn't have time to clean them.

That would take too much time from the 15 minutes he's allotted himself to paint a portrait.

Ohlerking, 47, of Mendham, usually stations himself next to the gallery every Saturday morning to paint free portraits. All he needs is someone to stand still for 15 minutes or less as he goes to town on his easel.

"My teacher did a project called overwhelmed portraiture," he said of his art teacher having students paint someone in 30 minutes.

"I couldn't get anyone to hold still for that long, so I bumped it down to 15," he said.

Ohlerking works in watered-down oils and honed his skills while living in Austin, Texas. He moved to New Jersey last year.

"I want a likeness," he said of direct painting.

"I get rid of as many details as possible," he said about why he doesn't focus on the uniqueness of a subject's facial features. Frankly, he doesn't have the time.

"You can't get stuck on an eyebrow," he said.

The nearby paint-flecked egg timer keeps track of his 15 minutes, and in that time he painted Samantha Hoos' Great Dane, Katie.

"It would take me about five or six hours for me to even know how to shape this," the Long Valley resident said of the finished product. "That's a true artform."

Ohlerking paints on long planks of Masonite -- what clipboards are made of -- and said it usually takes three or four days to dry. His subjects can either take them home that day, or wait for them to completely dry for a mid-week pickup.

Anthony Montalto, of Flanders, stopped by and agreed to stand still for a portrait.

"He's got a talent," he said. "There's no question about it."

Ohlerking paints for free because it helps draw attention not just to the gallery where he works, but also to the

surrounding Chester shops. Donations are certainly accepted.

"I like to paint, first of all," he said, adding kids sometimes are tougher to keep still than pets, but they're usually "goofy happy" to be painted.

"It's a really fun day," he said.

## Additional Facts

To view David Ohlerking's work, visit his Web site [www.davidohlerking.com](http://www.davidohlerking.com).

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