



Alton Artist Chelsea Masiero Specializes in Skeletons, Rats and the Piasa Bird

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - If you love the spooky, the weird and the completely genuine, stop by Milton Schoolhouse this month to check out Artist of the Month Chelsea Masiero's work.

"I'm obsessed with the Piasa Bird," Masiero said as we studied one of her favorite pieces: the Piasa Bird, with a septum piercing and barbed wire wrapped around its antlers. "Biggest inspiration, for sure."

This is the borderline Masiero walks as an artist. She's completely sincere, and she also knows it's funny. Her art hums with this self-awareness, even down to the brand she's

created. “Sh*tty Art By Sh*tty People,” or SABSP, is the name she uses for her t-shirt sales, and she especially likes the SABSP abbreviation because she was once “a big Pabst drinker.”

Masiero was an easy pick for the October Milton Artist of the Month, as many of her drawings veer toward the macabre. She said skeletons are easiest for her to draw, and she always sneaks a rat or two in every drawing in honor of her pets.

Masiero’s ink drawings are on display throughout Milton’s main hallway and available for purchase inside Maeva’s Coffee, where you can also buy prints that have been stained with Maeva’s beans. While Masiero has vowed to be less self-deprecating about her art, she noted that it’s been touching to see such a positive response from Milton visitors, especially since this is her first solo gallery.

“It’s really nice to hear that other people like it because I’m pretty hard on myself. I don’t think it’s all that great,” she said.

But with this recent confidence boost, she hopes to display her art more often. In the last year, Masiero has expanded to prints, commissioned posters, and t-shirt designs. She plans to focus more on clothing going forward. When, a few months ago, she saw the first batch of t-shirts printed with her design, she was ecstatic.

“I was just kind of getting my life on track, and it was a really big moment for me,” Masiero remembered. “Everyone’s got their own style, and I’m really realizing I’ve got a style and it’s noticeable. When I make posters and stuff, people know that was me who made it, which is really cool. People are wearing the shirts, and it’s pretty awesome to see.”

Masiero currently works in a tattoo shop in St. Louis, and though she isn’t wielding a tattoo gun (yet), she shared that the experience has “inspired” her work. She recently got an iPad, so she’s teaching herself how to draw digitally. But in the meantime, she’s always searching for a fresh Sharpie somewhere in her apartment to make sure the signature black-and-white ink drawings are as crisp as possible.

“I go over it a billion times,” Masiero laughed. “My hand’s cramping. I hold the pencil so hard and just go over and over again because I’m like, ‘It’s not black enough. I want it to be super black and white.’”

As Masiero becomes more involved with the art scene in Alton, she has enjoyed making new friends and engaging with other artists. The support from the Milton Schoolhouse

community and the thrill of seeing her designs in more places around town — her event posters taped up in windows, her t-shirts worn by people in the Riverbend and St. Louis — keep her going.

“It’s very welcoming,” Masiero added. “You don’t feel very self-conscious. It feels like everyone’s your friend and everyone’s really supportive, from music to art to everything, and it’s really cool. It makes you less scared to put yourself out there.”

To check out Masiero’s art, stop by Milton Schoolhouse through the end of October or follow her at her [official Instagram profile](#) and [Facebook page](#).

