

FRANKFORT AREA NEWS

Local Artist, Abra Shirley, Creates Olympic Watercolor

What do you do in your spare time? Well, if you're a writer, you write; if you're a chef, you cook; and if you're a painter, you paint! That would be the story behind this watercolor painting created by Abra Shirley. She schedules a



few hours a week outside of her other projects to sketch, experiment and work on things she'd like to improve on. Often, the subject matter includes things that are going on in her life. She says, "I always love watching the summer Olympics and it was the last week of the games, so I decided to do a watercolor study of some of my favorite American Olympic athletes."

Little did she know that it would soon be noticed by one of the Olympian's family members.

With the Olympics just finishing up, Abra decided to share her drawing on Instagram. It was thanks to her cousin, Jamie Feldmeyer, that Lisa Crouser saw the drawing. Lisa is the mother of Ryan Crouser, an American shot putter and discus thrower. He is a two-time Olympic gold medalist and Olympic record holder and the world record holder in the shot put, both indoor and outdoor. Ryan's mother actually saw the post after Abra's cousin, Jamie, recommended that she tag the athletes in the drawing. It didn't take long for Lisa to discover the post and she reached out to Abra with interest in purchasing the original. The original watercolor was delivered to the Olympian's mother in Oregon about two weeks ago. Abra has no plans to make any prints of the drawing and it will remain a one-of-a-kind original.

During the course of conversations between Abra and the Crouser family, she was surprised to discover that Ryan's uncle is a watercolor artist. When Abra was told his name was Dean Crouser, she remembered that she had done a watercolor project in high school based off of one of his pieces. Abra commented, "They definitely have a talented family. And what a small world it is through social media!"

Abra is a graduate of Frankfort High School and received her Bachelor's of Fine Arts (BFA) in Design, Illustration & Animation from Kansas University with a concentration in special education and American Sign Language. She has numerous prints on sale at Elsie Grace's, but most of her jobs have been made through word of mouth. Abra said, "It is such a blessing to have grown up in such a supportive community and family. Other work has come through connections I have made at KU, my website, Instagram and having a Dad who shares my artwork with everyone he knows and meets." You can find many

of Abra's drawings and prints on her website artbyabra.com or on Instagram [@art.by.abra](https://www.instagram.com/art.by.abra).

Abra enjoys working on a wide range of freelance work. One of her projects includes a second children's book that is tentatively planned to be released in late November or early December. It is a poem about an ornery bucket calf written by a talented first-time author. The first book she illustrated was a children's book *My Mommy and Daddy are Ranchers* by Wrenn Pacheco, which was released in 2020. Abra had the opportunity to study abroad in Italy during the summer of 2019 and has exhibited her work in several exhibitions and art shows, earning top awards. Abra's work has been on display in the KU Libraries Show, the KU Illustration & Animation Show, the Ascension Seton Spine & Rehabilitation Center Gallery in Austin, TX, and the Tiny Art Show in Lawrence. The Frankfort community looks forward to Abra's future artwork and continued success.

