

---

[https://tulsaworld.com/archive/spotlight-matt-moffett-executive-director-and-co-founder-of-the-tulsa-girls-art-school/article\\_867ce3af-5f30-5c89-85ad-a1a003ffd280.html](https://tulsaworld.com/archive/spotlight-matt-moffett-executive-director-and-co-founder-of-the-tulsa-girls-art-school/article_867ce3af-5f30-5c89-85ad-a1a003ffd280.html)

## **SPOTLIGHT: Matt Moffett, Executive Director and Co-founder of the Tulsa Girls Art School**

Nov 14, 2013

---



JESSICA TURNER

**B**ehind the positive changes in the city's community are men and women who are making significant efforts to influence the future of Tulsa. These generous citizens are intertwining their work with the community, and Matt Moffett, executive

director and co-founder of the Tulsa Girls Art School, is using his love of art to help mold the bright future of Tulsa's underprivileged young women

Moffett's career did not begin in the artistic way that it is now. He spent his childhood in California before moving to Owasso. He graduated from the University of Tulsa with a Spanish degree, and during his college career, he experienced the language first hand from living in Spain. While teaching as an adjunct professor for TU, a heartbreaking experience led him to a paintbrush. Moffett's dog died suddenly from a brain aneurysm. To honor his dog, he searched for an artist to paint a portrait of his pet. Unfortunately, he found high prices and a lack of animal portrait artists. This created the idea that he could do the job himself, and then began his self-taught career and his studio M2.

Moffett's art skills opened doors for him in many areas. He began teaching art at public schools like the Henry Zarrow International School and Eugene Field Elementary. His animal paintings have portrayed pets from close friends to commissioned paintings for clients like former U.S. president Gerald Ford and wife Betty.

"I've been very blessed to have almost 14 years under my belt as a painter and have had a lot of great commissions. It seems like every year it gets more and more, and I'm now known for people portraits as well and also cityscapes of Tulsa," he said.

His artistry can be seen at art shows. Last summer he was chosen for a show at New York City's School of Visual Arts among 36 artists from around the world, and South Hampton will be the area for his next gallery show.

While at Eugene Elementary, Moffett and his art students were able to raise \$12,000 for a new school garden by fundraising their artwork. This sparked the idea of the Tulsa Girls Art School (TGAS) by friend and local entrepreneur, Mona Pittenger. With this idea, Moffett and Pittenger opened TGAS in June 2007. TGAS is a nonprofit organization that provides an after school arts program for girls from inner-city schools in Tulsa. The program chooses a school without an art program and selects 12

third graders who can participate until their senior year. Through art, classes and shows, these girls are not only learning artistic skill, but are learning basic business skills and public speaking while developing their creative minds.

Moffett's roles as executive director range from teaching to marketing and more. He holds his greatest accomplishment as director to being able to keep the program going, but he also credits that to the community.

"It's not me, I think. It's the city of Tulsa and how they have adopted us. They love our program, and they come to our art shows, which is so important...My greatest achievement is that we are accepted and that we are succeeding," he said.

Moffett has taken his skills and used them in other projects. He recently published illustrations for a children's book, "Hayden's Moonbath," with local writer Mary Anne Lewis. The book was number 35 in the large print children's book category on Amazon, an accolade that he can add to his accomplishments including his 2011 Tulsey for Civic Entrepreneur. Moffett looks to continue the success of the TGAS and his own personal success. From this new experience in illustration, the girls of TGAS will be creating their own illustrated book next year. TGAS has even more in store with the launch of their capital campaign to raise money to serve more young girls in the community by constructing three new classrooms and hiring another teacher. Outside of the school, Moffett hopes to continue his artistic success and become a highly recognized, international artist.

Despite his busy work schedule, Moffett balances life by spending time with his partner, Jory, his dogs and friends and by exploring Oklahoma through nature walks and trips to other towns. The list of cities he has traveled to may be large, but he loves calling Tulsa home.

### **What's the best aspect of being executive director?**

To create quality programming for these girls and to come up with new, creative, innovative ideas that a board will support and say, 'How can I help you? How can we make this happen?'

## **What is your favorite piece of art done by one of the girls so far?**

There's been so many. I've seen these girls do incredible portraits...They're painting in oils, which I'm so excited about because that is the next level. Anybody could paint in acrylics and stuff like that, but to go to oils, that's more professional. I'm just blown away every semester by the kids.

## **What artists inspire you?**

Gustav Klimt blows my mind. Kehinde Wiley, he's a newer artist, and he is modern. He does these amazing portraits...I love Picasso. Matisse is incredible and Frida Kahlo for her courageous portraits. I adore so many of these people and what they all stand for. I'm lucky as an artist that is practicing now that I can research these amazing artists, see what they aspired their whole lives to create, look at photographs and study what they did and kind of continue where they left off.

## **If you could relive any moment in your life, what would it be?**

Living in Spain, definitely. That was the best golden years of my life. It was so amazing to go to a new culture. It's like you're four years old again. You're learning everything: the language, the customs, the culture.

## **Where do you see yourself in 10 years?**

I see the girls' school being this amazing, huge, beautiful, self-sustaining entity in Tulsa that has maybe 300 girls attending. I see myself flying all around the world to have amazing art shows being highly in demand, but I get to choose when and where. I see just happiness, living here in Tulsa blissfully.

-JESSICA TURNER

## **What they say**

"He is very generous and kind. He is always thinking of other people. Obviously a talented artist, it's amazing what he does with the kids...What he is teaching these girls is something that people would never do in their entire life. As a boss, he is great.

He is really encouraging. I just want to learn as much as I possibly can from him.”

Kendra Blevins

Assistant for the Tulsa Girls Art School

“Matt is probably one of the greatest manifesters I’ve ever met...I am in complete and utter awe of him most of the time. I think he is amazing...He has this beautiful, emotional connection to the girls.”

Lisa Regan

TGAS supporter and owner of Garden Deva