

A SPIRIT THAT IS NOT AFRAID



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Justin Patten paintings are taking Auburn by storm



Justin Patten at the Auburn University Bookstore holding his painting of Samford lawn after a win on game day. Photo by [Contributed by Justin Patten](#) | The Auburn Plainsman

By [Ella Walton](#) | Newsletter Editor

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Within Auburn's University's bookstore, customers can find a plethora of Auburn goodies: gifts, clothing, gameday merch — even art.

In 2010, Storm Striker Art was launched by artist Justin Patten, along with his wife and co-owner Rachel Patten, an Auburn alumna. Justin's line of Auburn art — featuring everything from magnets to mugs to printed sweatshirts and much more — can be found in the bookstore, along with Justin on annual Homecoming games, where he has painted live for the past three years.

Justin, who lives in Indiana with Rachel and their two boys, enjoys being able to visit Auburn and see familiar faces each year while he paints.

"I love the feeling I get when I'm turning off the interstate and I'm heading south to get to the campus — just the electricity that I feel. Entering a college town, entering Auburn, you can feel the energy of all the people working towards this next step in their lives," Justin said. "When I'm on the campus, I just get excited for all these people who are taking this step towards being whatever they're going to be and getting to be a little part in that."

Justin also loves seeing his wife's face light up when they reach Auburn University, where Rachel, who runs the business aspect of Storm Striker, earned her bachelor's degree in communications.

"I can just remember that point in my life, the friends that I made, the things I was learning, the parts of my life that I was going through, and to just have that connect to now and to be able to share that with my husband, and my kids," Rachel said. "They love Auburn just through me loving Auburn, and it's been a grateful circle feeling of being back home."

Storm Striker Art is licensed with 12 colleges and the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. They have also created collections of NFL, NHL and MLB art, as well as NBA All-Star work — all of which can be found on their [Instagram](#), [website](#) or [Etsy](#) page.

"I would say I never turn down a commission," Justin added. "I love doing all kinds of art, it's always fun to get a new challenge from somebody. Obviously, we do work with colleges, we do landscapes, and I love doing portraits of dogs."

The Pattens had not anticipated their business going this far. In fact, in 2020, Justin was still teaching full-time in Indiana, while Rachel ran a home daycare.

Justin was itching for an artistic outlet, which led him to start painting commissions for friends and family. Once he decided to mix his two passions — art and sports — he was hooked, and thus Storm Striker began.

"I always want to put all that energy from a sporting event into the paintings that I make," Justin said. "That's where my brushstrokes come from, just that energy of the last shot, those last five seconds, getting the final out, all that goes into a game."

This being only their second year as full-time artists, Justin and Rachel Patton admitted that the initial transition from art as a "side hustle" to a full-time business was quite scary.

"We just held hands, held our breath, jumped," Rachel said. "Worst thing that could happen is it doesn't happen and you have to go do something else, but you never know if you don't try."

Although the shift into pursuing art was an intimidating one, the Pattens' business has received an influx of encouragement.



[Contributed by Justin Patten](#)

Justin Patten and his wife Rachel, with their two boys Troy Storm (left) and Lyle Jacob (right).

“It’s been great, because people have been so supportive. Every time someone gets a flag, or gets a sticker, it means we get to keep going on with this ride and I get to keep painting,” Justin said.

Rachel says their goal is for each of their products to become someone’s favorite thing.

“If it’s a sticker, we wanted that sticker to be able to go on a water bottle through the dishwasher a hundred times, or go on your car and not fade or peel. Or if it was a t-shirt, we wanted it to be the comfiest t-shirt you have,” Rachel said.

Although it took more research and cost on their part, the Pattens believe that by creating higher quality products, their customers will remember them and come back for more.

Justin offers advice to aspiring artists who want to pursue their passions, just as he did.

“As an artist, you have to be patient, and you have to be okay with taking time to figure out what you’re passionate about,” Justin said. “Once you find that, don’t be afraid to put yourself out there and see where you can go with it.”

The professional integrity and fearlessness of Storm Striker is an encouragement to former students of the Pattens, Auburn students and anyone seeking inspiration.

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Ella Walton, majoring in English literature with a minor in creative writing, currently serves as the Newsletter Editor at The Auburn Plainsman. Formerly the Culture Editor, Walton has been with The Auburn Plainsman since the fall of 2023.



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