

Cathedral parishioner's post-injury art includes brand launch

One of the first things Archer Senft did in the aftermath of the Aug. 5, 2015, accident which left him a quadriplegic was test his artistic ability.

At the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, a private facility dedicated to spinal cord and brain injury rehab, an art therapist "rigged me up with some charcoal and put some paper in front of me," remembered Archer, 18, a parishioner of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Homeland and a participant in the parish's men's group. .

"I was just trying to get some muscle function in my arms," he explained. "I was able to make some rough, gestural movements, and I was able to create a spiral."

The spiral became a snail, and the snail, eventually, a logo, which has become a brand emblem as well as a symbol of certain personal qualities that a headfirst dive into an unseen sandbar failed to diminish: ambition and a sense of humor.

Slimeyard Slimes, featuring a retooled version of Archer's original drawing, is a line of T-shirts, caps and pastel ties, ostensibly appealing to the young, pier-side set, who tend to accessorize with sock-less shoes and aviator or Wayfarer-style sunglasses.

If the gear looks suspiciously similar to that of another label with a phonetically corresponding name and roughly equivalent - albeit more exclusive - target customer, it's intentional.

Slimeyard Slimes is a good-natured parody of Vineyard Vines, a brand that celebrates the good life on Martha's Vineyard, Mass., and features a smiling whale.

"A big market for us early on was people we know, especially through McDonogh (School) and the cathedral," explained Archer, who attended the School of the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen through eighth grade and McDonogh through 12th grade, which he completed in June.

Slimeyard Slimes "kind of advertises for itself," he added. "People will see it and

look it up. We're getting orders from all over the place, primarily the East Coast, but we're also seeing random orders from places like Minnesota and Illinois."

Archer credited Match Zimmerman, an artist and teacher at McDonogh, with helping him create the snail from his mind's eye.

"He encouraged me not to let go of art and creativity and expressing myself that way," Archer said.

With his injury limiting the use of his arms and hands, he found the computer an effective medium.

"The snail logo started as a project just to see what I could do," Archer said, adding that working digitally suits him well.

"In the past, I was always particular and precise in my work," he said. "I like things that are exact and clear. The digital media platform lends itself to that."

A collection of Archer's art currently hung in Sotheby's Art Gallery in Roland Park in July. Soon, his work will receive massive exposure when a mural he has designed will appear near the 7-11 on W. 28th St. in Remington.

It's a collaboration with well-known mural artist Michael Owens of the Baltimore Love Project and will include an "abstract, geometric design of the American flag in the background and portraits of people from the community," Archer said.

"I just love to see art on walls," he continued. "I like the idea of art that's accessible to everybody, and that makes the city more accessible and unique in its own way."

Archer heads to the University of Pennsylvania in August, where he will pursue a major in engineering.

He said graduating high school on time, despite the paralyzing accident between his junior and senior years, was a "major goal."

"I did what I could cobbling credits together," he said, adding that he studied in Atlanta in the early stages of his recovery, and later at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute before he returned to McDonogh full time.

He credits friends and family, particularly his father, Deacon William Senft, who serves at the cathedral, and mother, Louise Phipps Senft, a master organizer.

“She was very instrumental in getting people together to teach me,” Archer said, “and I was not even able to speak for a decent amount of that time.”