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Hidden messages: Taya with one of her finished works.

Intricate art for inquisitive eyes

By John Lawrence

Taya De La Cruz was regularly given detention at school for having writing that was too small for her teachers to read. Since then, she has turned what they saw as a shortcoming into the basis of her unique form of art.

Taya works from a basement studio in Leicester Road, N2, creating intriguing images with an extremely fine-tipped pen. From a distance they can be abstract or human shapes; but take a look close-up and they reveal hidden stories and secret messages.

Each one is constructed from Taya's tiny handwriting, painstakingly written letter by letter. Every minuscule character must be placed precisely and just one of her canvasses can represent 30-50 hours of work.

Each letter a pixel

Taya, who trained as an actress, says her art has come about by accident. She shared her father's interest in cal-

ligraphy and found she was always able to write small and often in different fonts. But it is only by sharing her work on Instagram and including it in her first public show at the Truman Brewery in East London this year that her Handwritten Art business has started to take off.

"Words and text have always been important to me," she says. "I got detention all the time as a kid but at the same time I won every handwriting competition I entered because I could be neat. Now as an adult when I feel creative I still need to find an outlet.

"To me, every letter in my images is like a pixel on a screen. They are intended to be seen as a whole, like little eco-systems,

but people are also intrigued to look closely at them and realise they could be hiding a secret message that's staring them in the face but can't be seen."

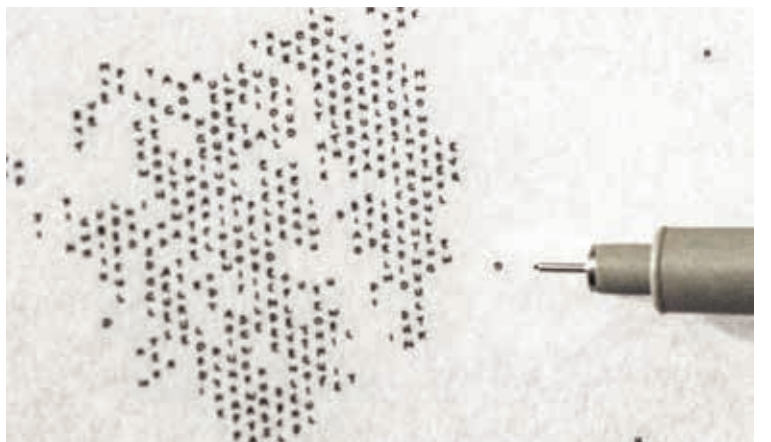
In a happy place

Taya uses a Pigma Micron pen with a nib measuring barely more than a tenth of a millimetre across and works against an upright light board, wearing gloves to protect her paper. Despite the effort and the concentration required, she calls it her "happy place" and says for her it is like a form of meditation.

Taya has started selling her work and has begun to receive commissions. Find out more at handwrittenart.com or follow her @handwrittenart.



Small world: Taya uses tiny lettering to create large images.



Two trios for piano

The Solarek Piano Trio will perform two piano trios side by side at a concert in Burgh House, Hampstead, next month.

The concert takes place on Friday 14 February at 6.30pm. Tickets priced £15 (£10 concessions) are available from www.ticketsource.co.uk/solarek-piano-trio or at the door.

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