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## Mesa high school senior hand paints prom dress

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(<http://media.bonnint.net/az/34/3442/344268.jpg>)

Henry David Thoreau once said, "This world is but a canvas to our imagination." Mesa, Arizona, high school senior Julia Reidhead used her imagination to replicate her favorite painting, Vincent van Gogh's (<http://www.biography.com/people/vincent-van-gogh-9515695>) "The Starry Night." ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Starry\\_Night](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Starry_Night)) on an unusual canvas: her prom dress.

When the 18-year-old was first asked to prom she decided to use the opportunity to create a one-of-a-kind dress. Having participated twice in the Vans Custom Culture (<http://sites.vans.com/customculture/>) contest, she gained an appreciation for working with an uncommon canvas to express her artistic talents. She decided to apply these skills and hand-paint her prom dress, thinking to herself, "How hard could it be?"

After searching for several weeks to find a dress with a heavy enough fabric to use, Reidhead and her mother finally located a modest, gently used wedding dress at the local [Deseret Industries \(http://deseretindustries.org/?lang=eng\)](http://deseretindustries.org/?lang=eng). The dress fit perfectly and had sleeves as well as some lace and pearl details.

Reidhead loved the details of the dress, commenting, "This will make for amazing textures! I'll just paint right over them."

Mother and daughter purchased the dress for \$40 and immediately removed the train. Reidhead used the extra fabric for practice with her acrylic paints.

To begin, Reidhead first sketched the concept on paper. She decided to use the large tree in van Gogh's original painting on the side of the dress. To make the design circular, she determined the painting should mirror itself on the front and the back. Using a pencil, she then sketched the design on the fabric.

She began painting the dress from the bottom up. When describing the process, Reidhead explained, "As you paint you must let it dry. I used acrylic paint, so I had to wait to get the desired effect." The tree was first and then the village along the hemline. She gradually worked her way up the dress, ending with the starry sky.

Painting the dress took about 10 days. The teen's mother, Karen Reidhead, noted, "She had it spread all over the dining table for a week."

Reidhead did not tell her prom date, Alden Durfee, also of Mesa, much about the dress beforehand. She wanted it to be a surprise. And it was. Durfee was astonished, saying, "Her dress was beyond amazing."

"His first words were, 'Wow! You painted that?!'" Reidhead remembers. "And then he said, 'You will be the talk of the dance!'"

Durfee was right. "People would look my way and then do a double-take. They continued to look at me until I walked their way," Reidhead recalls. Many of the teens at the dance recognized Van Gogh's famous work; others not familiar with the painting were equally impressed with the uniqueness and beauty of the gown.

Photos of Reidhead's dress posted on social networking sites have also generated numerous positive comments about her work and talent.

Reidhead recently graduated from Mountain View High School in Mesa. She wants to continue painting on clothing and plans on using her artistic talents to work in the field of graphic design.

*Rebecca Irvine is the author of MTC at Home (Covenant 2014) and Follow the Prophets (Covenant 2013). She is an adjunct faculty professor of Communication Studies at Mesa Community College.*



**Julia Reidhead, 18, hand-painted her prom dress to look like Vincent van Gogh's "Starry Night."  
(Photo: Karen Reidhead)**



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