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## An out artist's journey



By Amy Wooten  
*Staff Writer*

Being let go from his sales job in 2001 led to Chicago artist Armando Pedroso.

In October 2001, Pedroso was a 42-year-old felt lost. He had his grief, something wonderful.

"One day, I literally was in the car on his "favorite place in the world" when I heard a voice that said "Paint."

At first, he ignored the voice. His first art class was literally in fifth grade. But that voice kept interrupting. When he told friends and family, they laughed. After a while, he realized it was his calling.

He started making and framing art. He went to an office and asked if realtors would buy his art. He sold five.

"And that was it," Pedroso said. "I was in sales."

Since then, Pedroso has continued to work in his studio and participates in countless art shows a year. He made his first sale in 2001.

For this out artist, he relies heavily on his feelings at that moment in his work.

And diverse, it is. Pedroso's work ranges from graffiti to abstracts. He uses a wide variety of materials. For most artists, he doesn't get all his supplies at arts and crafts stores—he shops around town.

"Its almost like common objects call out to me—"Use me, use me!" he said with a laugh.

For example, just the other day, while he unpacked canvasses, some corrugated board fell out onto the floor. The next thing he knew, Pedroso was using the board to provide texture in a painting.

Listening to that voice years ago transformed Pedroso's life. He's happy. He travels. He has a studio.

He also has a job he feels good about. For instance, he donates his work to GLBT org at Children's Memorial Hospital, an experience he said "really puts things into perspective."

Long gone is the unhappiness, the cubicle.

Additionally, his journey helped him come to terms with himself. While working in corporate, Pedroso said that when he became an artist, he felt like he finally became a "whole person" enabled him to step all the way out of the closet.

"I feel like when I finally became that whole person as an artist, I finally came out," Pedroso said.

Much of his work, in fact, is inspired by that experience of becoming whole. Many of his paintings feature a central figure.

"I think people can definitely relate that to people and to life," Pedroso said. "That all the things we do are part of a person, a life."

Pedroso said he learned a valuable lesson from his life transformation that he hopes others can learn from.

See Pedroso's work in one of several upcoming shows, such as the Port Clinton Art Festival, Aug. 29-30, in downtown Highland Park. See [armandopedroso.com](http://armandopedroso.com) for more information.

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