

Art and How it Shaped Me

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My first memory of Art has to be decorating Easter eggs with my family when I was about 3 years old. My Dad was always very enthusiastic when doing anything hands-on and I believe I got that trait from him. During every holiday season, I remember doing some sort of activity. I didn't think of it as art at the time, but looking back, I realize it was all art or the art of expression; carving pumpkins, making snowmen, building kites, etc.

When I was 4, my mom enrolled me in jazz, tap, and ballet dance. I remember making many friends, but I don't really remember loving dance. Even today, I'm not a fan of dancing, so maybe my childhood experience has something to do with that!

I was an Indian Princess when I was between 6-10 and we were always building and creating things. I remember the overnight campouts and there were always crafts being made, face painting, and drum playing.

When I was about 10 years old, I remember taking an art class from a local artist and a teacher at the local middle school. I went with my best friend and we always had a blast. From that artist, I learned to appreciate all things in the world as being part of an artistic piece. She would often take us out into her garden and have us pick our favorite flower to draw and paint. We used watercolors and learned how to use space. My dad was an avid duck hunter, so once during art class, I painted one of his decoys and gave it to him for, I believe, Father's Day. That piece of art went into the local art show and I won! From that point on, I have nothing but positive memories of painting. My mom still has that painting.

After that, I don't really have any memories pertaining to art until I went to college and took a class in ceramics. I loved it! Being able to create something with your hands was exhilarating. I even ended up purchasing a wheel, which I've never used!

I learned to knit and crochet when I was about 25 and I really enjoyed doing that. It was a stress reliever and people would ask me to create something for them. I felt needed and important, which was quite amazing! People actually liked my work. I got really good at making granny square baby blankets.

Thinking back about my memories of art, I'm noticing that 1) there was a lot that I did with my dad 2) I enjoy creating things and 3) I'm actually pretty good at it, even though I don't feel that way as an adult. I'm wondering if my memories of my younger years revolving around my dad have to do with the fact that he recently passed away. I'm trying to think back of anything including my mom, but I can't. I know she was always around and very supportive, but my memories are filled with my dad and his love of creating and building things and teaching me to do the same.

I do not have the same desire to create things with my hands like I once did as a child. I actually get annoyed when I have to create a poster or chart for my classroom. I used to think of myself as an "ok" artist and that I could draw, basic things, but I could draw. Now, I don't see art in the same way. I often will trace someone else's drawing or ask a colleague to create it for me. I really think I need to get back into creating, building, and painting. Thinking back, it helped me focus, keep my mind off other things, and kept me grounded. I miss those feelings.

My definition of art would be anything that someone can do to express themselves. Some people view art as painting. Others view it as dancing. I believe that it is all art. Art can even be the doodling on your notebook when you're in a boring meeting! I have lots of doodles! People's ability to appreciate other people's art shows that they are open to any and all possibilities. I notice in my classroom that when we've done an art project to connect to a piece of literature, or social studies content, that many students create things that are vastly different from one another. This ability shows that anyone is capable of creating a unique art piece and that people are going to appreciate it. Even if I can't tell what the student drew or meant to draw, their mother will always come in, name it, say how beautiful it is, and hang it up on her fridge. This to me builds up the student and allows them to keep creating and being artistic.

I believe that my opinion of art has not changed, I love it, even if I am not confident in myself. I should not doubt myself or my abilities, but I think as we get older, we care more about what other's think than we should and that we let outside influences dictate what we do as humans.

While writing and reflecting, I'm noticing that I've gone back and forth on my stance, definition, and view of art. I'd really like to get back to how I felt about it as a child and truly enjoy every aspect of it. I love listening to music, reading books, and viewing art at museums, but I don't want to see my own. I am hopeful that during this semester, my love of art will return and I will be able to positively project that onto my students.