

Art Autobiography

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As a child I don't remember going to art classes in school, so I'm guessing that either my elementary school didn't have a dedicated art class or whatever we did in class did not make a lasting impression on me. The only thing that I do remember from elementary school was coloring pictures in class with crayons, and that we had to stay within the lines. I'm sure there was more, but it must not have been worthy of a lasting memory. Honestly, I have only one memory of my art classes in school, which was a clay project in middle school. I created a clay dog head, was very proud of it, and still have it. Because I am a very tactile learner, this was the type of project that suited me and is probably why it created a lasting memory.

Throughout high school I avoided "art" because I couldn't draw or paint "accurately". No one ever told me that developing my own style was acceptable. Most of my positive memories of art revolve around projects done with my mother and not anything done while at school. Sharing a common interest and talent with a parent creates a really special bond, something that lasts a lifetime and beyond. To this day, although my mom has been gone for many years, I still think of how much she would love my creations, every time I finish a project.

As a child, there was a huge collection of family art which was always displayed throughout my family's homes. My grandmother and great grandmother were amazing artists, a talent which my older twin brothers also inherited. My grandparents grew up in Massachusetts, specifically in the Gloucester area, so many of their paintings involved the ocean, fishing scenes, and weathered fishermen. Growing up, I didn't consider myself an artist because I was not able to create paintings and works of art like those of my grandparents. It didn't help that my older twin brothers also inherited the ability to draw and paint what they saw. Because I did not have

the ability to replicate the detail that I observed around me, I figured that I was not an artist. It wasn't until I was much older that I realized there was much more to art than drawing and painting, and having the ability to accurately produce a realistic looking piece.

As I began to experiment with other forms of art I realized that artistic talent can take on many different forms. In middle school I discovered my love for sewing (This is one of the reasons that I hate the fact that many schools are doing away with Home Economics.) and to this day still enjoy selecting fabric and sewing clothes, costumes, and quilts. Throughout their childhood, it gave me great pleasure to make clothes and Halloween costumes for my two daughters. Involving my girls in the selections of fabric for their clothing was always a great sharing experience. My love for sewing also lead me into the world of designing and creating quilts. Someone once told me that they didn't consider quilting an art and my reply was, "You've obviously never made one!". Creating art with thread, yarn, and recycled items is another area of interest of mine. Knitting, crocheting, and finding ways to repurpose items are other forms of art that I find great joy in, creating original designs by selecting and combining various colors, resulting in items of clothing, afghans, rugs, and various decorations.

Art has always been a great opportunity to share a common interest with someone, whether it be with family members, a club, or students at school. Although not interested in sharing my love for crocheting as teens, as adults, both of my daughters are now creating all sorts of interesting projects for themselves, their children, and friends. Being a part of knitting and quilting groups is a means of socializing and sharing ideas. My interest in repurposing items that others would generally throw away or recycle has become part of my 7th and 8th grade curriculum through various upcycling engineering projects that I do with them. Any form of art can be a great learning, sharing, and bonding experience.

I definitely feel like I have been successful in art. Prior experiences have had both negative and positive impacts on me and have affected my artistic choices of today. Although still hesitant to grab a piece of paper and begin to sketch independently, because I love drawing and painting, I enjoy going to the painting classes where instructors take the group through a painting, step by step. I choose to express myself through yarn and fabric and through designs created on the computer. These choices allow me to express my creativity using art forms that I excel at and am comfortable with.

In my eyes, anything that involves creativity and design is an artform. Everyone has the ability to be creative, as long as they are not discouraged from letting those talents emerge. I encourage my students to express their creativity by illustrating stories, science notebooks, and creating original designs. If a student says, "I can't draw.", I tell them that we can all draw, it's just that everyone's drawings look different. That's what makes individual creations special. One of the greatest barriers to artistic expression is an individual's fear of not being good enough, brought about by comparing themselves to others, which was my greatest downfall. I encourage students to take a chance and try new things, something that I was always afraid to do as a child. I encourage students to take a chance without the fear of being wrong or not good enough. Because of the insecurities that I had when I was young, I try to build my students up by giving them projects that will allow their individual ideas and talents to emerge. The more we encourage our students to use their imagination and creativity, the better they will become at idea generation, troubleshooting, and decision making.