

ART AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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The Arts in STEAM: Advancing Meaningful Integration

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Abstract

In this essay, I reflect on my experiences with art from childhood to present day. I analyze recurring themes within my recall and reflection and how art has influenced my growth trajectory over the course of my life. Throughout this essay, I call back positive connections to art and how I have been able to assign art a personal definition.

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Recall

My earliest memories of my experiences with art start in my childhood, with my mom. My mom is a teacher and was always doing arts and crafts projects with my brother and me as a child. There was an area in our apartment growing up that I would liken now to a “makerspace.” My mom was always collecting things from nature during our hikes that we could use to make creations and patterns. During each vacation, she would encourage play where we would learn new artistic endeavors, such as working with clay or weaving. She was constantly challenging us to think outside the box and be creative. She inspired me to view everyday objects as art.

When I entered elementary school, I was already in love with art, because of the environment my mom created. I remember working on numerous projects with my teachers, like transforming a milk container into a figurine made out of plaster. I have fond memories of taking art classes in both middle and high school. It was in high school that I discovered my love for drawing when we were required to create a portfolio of different artifacts. As part of this project, I remember sitting for hours in front of my grandma’s house drawing one of her trees, despite my parents calling me incessantly to come inside. I realize now that I was so tuned into my drawing, that I didn’t even hear them.

My mom also plays piano, and growing up I was her biggest fan. I started taking lessons when I was seven, and although I loved the sound of the piano, playing did not come easy for me. Despite taking lessons, for eight years, I was not disciplined enough at the time to practice consistently and eventually I quit. To this day, I wish I could remember how to play the piano and that I could follow in my mom’s footsteps.

I believe living closely to New York City and its art scene has been a huge influence on my perception and experiences with art. For as long as I can remember, I have gone with family and friends to art museums and Broadway plays. As a tradition, my mom and I have a “mother/daughter date” to see a play. I believe that this tradition, propelled me to join the choral

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group in high school, and also work backstage in our drama department. Although I never acted on stage, I loved being a part of the experience and watching my friends take on the role of the characters they played. My best friend is an art teacher in New York City and we frequent various art museums for work and for fun. For example, last December, we went to the MOMA where she exposed me to abstract art, and the idea that art is not always just a pretty experience. Being in close proximity to New York City has allowed me to see art from various perspectives and broadened my experience in the realm of art.

Reflect

Reflecting on my experiences with art as a child for this paper has brought me joy and inspired me to engagement in art. The ever-present theme that is reflected in this paper, is that I have been exposed to many types of art and art related experiences at a young age. From looking at patterns in nature, while on hikes with my parents to taking ordinary objects and redesigning them into something new or more purposeful or aesthetic, to watching plays and analyzing various types of art with my friends, has deepened my appreciation for art over time.

It wasn't until my adulthood that art became an escape for me. I have numerous sketch books in my closet, full of cartoons or sketches that I created at some of the hardest times in my life, whether losing a family member, experiencing heartbreak or navigating stressful times at work. I think having exposure to so many different art related experiences as a child has allowed art to become therapy in my adult life.

Most recently, I decided to take a formal art class at a botanical garden in my hometown this past summer. When I got to the class, I realized I was not only the youngest person there but also the least experienced. Having not taken a formal art class in over ten years, I was

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immediately discouraged by my perceived lack of “talents” in comparison to the others in the class. I was immediately frustrated, which was especially apparent during the critique section of the class. Upon reflection, I remembered a book study that I attended entitled Grit by Angela Duckworth where I learned that art is not about the final product, but rather about the process. Art, for me, is about finding yourself in the process and struggle and learning to adapt, develop and revise a project, as well as applying those skills to personal self development. I am hoping to continue to take more art classes in the future, to further my skills and also to further my technical skills as well as develop my understanding and relationship with art.

Connect

I believe that art is an experience, and not just a final product. To me, art is a learning experience, where each step of the way the artist can take something with them, or revise the project if inspiration strikes. Art allows you to improvise, adapt and re-evaluate throughout the process. It allows you to learn about yourself and can act as a form of expression and release.

My definition of art has been shaped by my childhood experiences, where I was encouraged to “play” and “tinker” with art. As an adult I found art to be a place for exploration, reflection, and expression. Art has become a release for me, as it has allowed me to work through my frustrations or fears in order to better understand these emotions and to grow. Like a piece of art is never truly finished, I feel we are never finished growing as humans. In that way, I believe art is a process that can always be redefined, or revised.