

# ART AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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The Arts in STEM Advancing Meaningful Integration

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## Abstract

This art autobiography will recall my relationship with art throughout my life and will make connections to my present feelings and assumptions about the subject. The paper will also cover my personal reflection and how my experiences are reflected in my teaching practices. Finally, I will draw from my experiences and reflections to create my own definition of what art is and how I hope to incorporate art into my current teaching practices.

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## **Introduction**

Humans have been partaking in art for thousands of years. The earliest artistic creations date back to the stone age So what is art? It seems that everyone has a slightly different idea about what art is and it changes depending on your personal relationship with art. Below I will explore my personal experience with the arts to try to come up with my definition of the word.

## **Recall**

Elaine Ruth (Dunwald) Matthews, born March 29,1968, to Ruth and Frank Dunwald. I was the youngest daughter of five children. I was raised in a conservative middle-class family, where money wasn't plentiful, but we always seemed to have enough to go around. I grew up in a little suburban town in New Jersey called Sayreville. I spent many days playing outside and always felt loved and cared for.

My relationship with art started as a young child. As far back as I can remember my mother and my siblings would perform arts and craft projects at the kitchen table. Sometimes we would take walks in the woods, collect rocks, wildflowers, and other trinkets which we would use to make projects out of. By the age of three, I started dance/tumbling classes at Ms. Jackie's school of dance. I remember how special it felt going to dance class. I loved watching myself in the mirror, dressing up in special clothes and moving to the music. Performing recitals on the high school stage was exciting in spite of how huge the stage felt.

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As I grew older, I started to become body conscious and no longer felt comfortable performing on stage in front of an audience. I'm not sure when it happened but those once loved recitals became filled with anxiety and worry. At the age of twelve, I began making excuses not to go to dance class. Going to dance class didn't seem cool at that age, fitting in was much more important. I eventually stopped going to dance class. I remember my mom saying she was not going to argue with me and waste her money. I always missed taking dance class, years later I took a few classes but could never get over my fear of performing publicly and never stepped on the stage again. I still love to dance and sometimes I wished my mother would have pushed and encouraged me to continue.

Throughout school art, music and theater was something we all did. I remember in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade bringing home that huge trombone. Needless to say, I did not have a passion for playing an instrument. One of my older sisters played the clarinet and participated in the school band. Its funny because at times I wanted to emulate my sisters and at other times I wanted to become my own person.

Throughout my life, I have always enjoyed visual arts. I like to draw and paint for my own personal pleasure, but I never studied formally. I don't even remember taking art in high school. However, about twenty years ago I took an Introduction to Art at my community college to fill an elective requirement. I really enjoyed this class. My instructor asked me if I had any formal training and felt that I had some artistic skills. She asked me if I ever thought about pursuing the visual arts more seriously. To be honest, pursuing a career involving any art form was not practical or acceptable in my family. It certainly was not because art wasn't appreciated, but my parents definitely did not support us making a career of it. I remember my oldest sister being a very talented artist but once she finished high school it became a thing of the past.

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During my adult life I have occasionally taken workshops for a variety of classes, such as ballroom dancing, pottery, wood crafting and jewelry making. I especially enjoy participating in art while socializing with my family and friends. It is both relaxing and fun to connect with each other while doing something we enjoy.

### **Reflection**

Reflecting on my art experiences really made me realize how much I love doing art for myself. I never realized how much my family experiences helped influence my choices related to art. Being the youngest of five infused art into my life at an early age. I observed my sibling participating in various arts. My parent's ideas shaped my overall appreciation or lack of appreciation of art as a viable career choice for our social class. Creating art for my own personal satisfaction has always been an important part of who I am. I think my teaching style completely reflects me as an occasional artist. Art seems to be intertwined throughout my life, much like I intertwine it in my lessons. I would love to inspire my students to use and explore all their artistic qualities to enrich their own lives. Exploring my own experience with art has made me realize just how much influence it can have in our lives personally and socially. Defining art is very complex and flexible because it can be expressed in many ways and every person has their own experience with it. Art is undefinable it can be created from anything it is malleable and can be anything to anyone.