

Art Autobiography

by Deanna Fioresi

Art has always been an integral part of my life. In elementary school, I had a fantastic art teacher named Mrs. Marchand. She was one of the only teachers that taught and showed us that there was always more than one way to create a project and that there are no wrong answers when it comes to art. One thing she always did when she demonstrated cutting something out was sing a little chant of “cut slow-ly on the line, cut slow-ly on the line...”. I still remember this and use it with my own children. I loved her “messy” projects! Especially paper mache and painting. Those were the projects that took the longest and made me the proudest.

In middle school, we not only had art class, but also home economics and shop class! I’ve always had an interest in hands on projects that allowed me to showcase my creativity. In sixth grade, we learned to sew a pillow in home economics. We could design the front with whatever we’d like as long as we used the sewing machine. In shop class, we learned how to use power tools and I actually used power tools to create a working clock! By all means, this was the best project that I have ever made while in school!

During high school, I didn’t choose to take the art courses. I’m not sure why. Maybe it was due to the fact that I had an interest in computers. Our elementary and middle school computer classes were very lacking. Once I took a desktop publishing class, I was hooked! I enjoyed the neatness of the lettered fonts and how I could rearrange the words, shapes and pictures on

the page. The love of this carried into college as I earned my Business Education degree to become a computer teacher.

Being artistic continued to inspire me throughout my adulthood. In my personal life, I enjoy scrapbooking and card making...again laying out the words and pictures on the page. I've enjoyed numerous paint "parties" that I usually added my own twist to the original idea. My daughters also love to craft. At an early age, I gave them paint and an easel. I hung their paintings all over their room and playroom. They still enjoy sidewalk chalk and making homemade gifts for family members. My 10-year-old loves to draw and my 6-year-old loves to explore her engineering side and make things from cardboard, craft supplies and hot glue.

As a teacher, I've incorporated the arts a lot into my technology curriculum. For starters, we have Ozobots, which are line following robots. The codes they read are color coded. I have my students create maps out of the lines and codes to perform various challenges. Next year, I plan to have them build an Ozobot City using cardboard and paints and then having them code their Ozobot through the city. They also create marble mazes for my roller coaster unit using cardboard, popsicle sticks, straws and other craft materials. Some classes have used the design process to engineer new packaging for cans to eliminate the plastic rings that are harmful to the environment. Our most recent project included creating an object in TinkerCad and then 3D printing it! I have had many students shine with this program.

Reflecting on my experiences, working with my hands made me happiest. Hands on projects allowed me to explore my creativity and express myself. I also feel that it releases hormones that give me a calming, relaxing effect. What I find odd is that the “messy” crafts I use to love, I don’t like to offer my children and students. I’m quite sure it’s due to the actual cleaning up of the mess that is a turn off to me, but my kids do enjoy that kind of art. I do feel that I have been successful in art. Those fundamentals learned in elementary school gave me a foundation to build on with other mediums, whether it be computer or paper generated. In my painting class events, I often feel a sense of pride as I stand back and look at my masterpiece. I’ve also had a few paintings that turned out to be a disaster in my eyes. What I had in mind, didn’t turn out the same way on paper. This has happened in my card making and scrapbooking as well. Sometimes, the change was good, and sometimes I would scrap the idea and move on to another one. I think the key is not to stress over it and just have fun in the process. Last school year, when my school district wanted to add more STEM into my computer lab, I was terrified. I only knew how to create on the computer. Coding, robotics and engineering weren’t something I was familiar with. Knowing how much students love technology, I wasn’t sure how well this change was going to go over. As it turns out, many of my students PREFER the hands-on STEM projects to the computer-generated ones. Of course, I still have to teach computer skills, but I’m getting better at developing lessons that use the computer as just a part of the project, not the entire project. I’ve never really

thought about how art in my personal life could affect my classroom. Turns out, technology mixed with art is really engaging and my students are hooked. I'm hoping that one day one of my lessons will be one that they pull from their memory bank to share with others.

Art is creating to show expression. Art is making something. Art can be computer generated or it can be made with other mediums including paper, cardboard, paint, wood, fabric and everything in between. When my mom purchased me a new pack of crayons, I was the happiest girl in the world! Who doesn't love a new box of crayons? To tell the truth, I still get excited to give my girls a new box of crayons because they show the same excitement and I know they'll be busy in no time having fun...and want to include me! Art can be picture painting, sculpture engineering, woodworking, glass blowing, fabric sewing, clay molding, desktop publishing, and just about anything else that allows someone to express their creativity. Some would say art is in a hairstyle, choice of outfit, or gift of music. I feel that art is a broad term and can be all of these things and more. Art is a way of channeling the creativity inside of us to share with others. I've had the privilege of having educators, friends and co-workers that aren't afraid to express themselves, and I've learned and continue to learn through them. Being around them has made me feel free to express myself too. Although I wouldn't consider myself an artist, I would certainly say that I am crafty. Being crafty enough to add an artistic twist to my technology lessons has been so much fun for me and for my students!