

## **Art when I was in K-12**

Ever since elementary school I knew my mechanics were not going to impress anyone in the art scene. As young students we seemed to have a lot of crafts that revolved around scissors and construction paper. My first memory was in kindergarten when Mrs. Huson told us to draw our house along with our family. The house I lived in was apparently the only leaning house in town and my family were shaped like sticks with giant heads with giant hollow eyes. It was an assignment given to us so we could remember our home address. Therefore, the next step was to cut out a pre-drawn house from construction paper and write our address on it. We were then to paste this onto the house we had already drawn. My construction paper house would have looked better if I had just left the scissors out of the equation and ripped along the lines. This project set the standards of my art education for the rest of my elementary career. My craft pieces were always among the masterpieces. It was the one on the end, very plain crooked and jagged.

After sixth grade I retired my artistic skills and entered into the world of black and white safety. One day in junior high I bought a box of cassette tapes from a yard sale and got introduced to the punk rock culture. As I started digging into this world I became infatuated with self-published fanzines, zines for short, that were extremely popular with us gutter types. These publications were generally written by someone from the punk scene with lots lowbrow art and comics that protested some aspect of society our young minds were upset about. The drawings were usually simply illustrated with a Sharpie marker with a strong message. The adventure was in finding the

publishers of the zines and talking them into photo copying one for me. I still have many of the zines and they still hold a special place in my life today.

The biggest discouragement came in my junior year of high school. I needed an elective and art was looking to be my only choice. The art teacher in our high school was also our math teacher and she had a reputation for being extremely strict and rigid. She told me that everyone had different artistic abilities and she graded on effort. There were several projects we had to undertake, but two of them stand out to me.

The first was a pinch pot. We were to make a pinch pot and paint on it in a Hopi style. We learned about the Hopi culture and history and their art and I could not wait. I started my pinch pot. I made the perfect base. Then, it was all downhill from there. I could not for the life of me even out my pinch pot to be smooth. I spent hours on this project. I spent lunch periods and study halls working on this pinch pot. I wanted the final result to be perfect, because I wanted a pot just like the Hopi had. The deadline came and it was a globby mess. I was embarrassed. The art teacher screamed at me and told me how ridiculous my pinch pot was and how it was not going into the kiln because it didn't deserve such treatment. She put it in anyway. She gave me a 70% for a grade. I felt awful and jealous of everyone else's pinch pot. However, it holds something special to me that I cannot describe. I still have it today and it holds a few random items from my grandmother who has since passed away.

The second project affected me during this nightmare semester was the final project. We had to make a 24 x 36 creation out of pastels. This was a hard project for me because my skin is so dry. It still gives me the creeps to think about touching the

chalk and rubbing it into the dry piece of paper for hours. I decided to draw a castle with some really cool gargoyles. The result was not perfect, but I really liked my art. Although, it was not as perfect as some of my classmates, I thought it looked like I found something I could do artistically. The teacher felt differently. I had not shaded it to her standards and just like my house in kindergarten, the occupant of my castle was going to have to live in a slightly tilted house. She gave me a 50%, giving me just enough points to barely pass the course. I threw it away in her little trash can next to her desk. I wondered if I would understand some sort of life lesson from her when I got older. I still think she was an awful art teacher and hope I never make a student of mine feel the way I did that day.

### **Art after high school**

I moved to Denver to go to college and immediately found myself calling a gaggle of artists my friends. I was immersed in music, theatre, visual arts, and anything that resembled the arts. I frequented the coffee shops of the city viewing art and arguing literature. I spent my social life at the galleries of the metro area, mostly in the Santa Fe art district. It was a lowbrow art dream come true for me. However, none of them knew my deep dark secret of the pinch pot and pastels.

My love for art came to a maximum when my friend Steve Tracy came up with an idea called Art Reaching Kids (ARK). He asked me to help him with this non-profit organization where we would partner with cultural institutions and teach kids how to paint. We used the 3-3's methods of Jackson Pollock which always made a pretty cool

piece of art. We would then have an art show, where people would come buy a piece of their art for \$75. The money would go into the kid's account, so when they were released from the center they would have a little money. We immediately partnered with Excelsior, a group home for troubled teenage girls. Most of them suffered abuse from family members and were addicted to drugs. The art they created was beyond powerful. The pride in their eyes after they created their art and people loved it enough to purchase was indescribable. We did this for about 3 years, then Steve moved to Toronto and the non-profit went into a different direction. I sold my financial services practice and moved back to Northeastern Colorado to become a teacher. I needed a large classroom to put my now large art collection.

### **Art experiences**

Art is emotional. It is not all about having a skill and it is definitely not about impressing a high school art teacher. The art teacher I had in high school would have wanted me to drink wine with my friends while I pay someone to teach me to replicate their painting. I wanted all art to be unique, new, and something I have never seen before. Although, I have tried my hand at painting and other forms of art, I have yet to impress anyone. I hated art the day I through my pastel castle away and thought all artists were pretentious and hateful people. Everything had to be nice, neat and straight and not pulled out of a person's brain. I am so happy for the people I have in my life that changed this outlook, so I can enjoy the endless art of the universe.

I have not created the artistic masterpieces I had planned on creating, mostly because of a lack of talent and creativity, but I will never count out the possibility. I have been extremely successful in creating interest and an appreciation for visual arts in my small rural school. I have had a hand in helping troubled youth create the favorite pieces of my collection, that hit me hard on a daily basis.

### **Art Defined**

Art is the original creation using the imagination of a human. These creations become works of emotional power and appreciated by the spectator. I have grown positively as a person through my experiences with the visual arts. I have a constant hunger to be immersed in art and love the creativity it can stimulate within my STEAM classroom.