

## Art Autobiography

Mathew Wolford

The Arts in STEM: Advancing Meaningful Integration

I like art. I think it's about as strange and different as all of us. One thing I've noticed is that art is multifaceted. The creator has their interpretation and then the viewer has their own way of experiencing the art as well. I was exposed to great art early in my education. I went to elementary school in the San Diego Public School system. There was a big emphasis on art and how different it can be and how many different purposes it can serve. Art can be created to entertain or as a form of intimate expression. Art can also be a way of telling history or inspire political change. I remember the first time our bus came to a stop underneath a major underpass in Southern California and I thought, "What are we doing HERE?" Then I looked up and saw a beautiful mural that was painted to celebrate the work of Cesar Chavez. The painting was HUGE. It was gorgeous. There were cars flying around, sirens blaring in the distance, trash in piles near the cement barriers, but here was this beautiful work of art that must have been thirty feet tall and maybe twenty feet wide. As I type now I can still see that painting, twenty-six years later. I don't remember our teacher being an artist but she was so good at getting us outside

and introduced our class to “the different.” We went to museums but we also toured places around the city that artist had reclaimed and made beautiful. There was an artist names “Wyland” who painted ocean murals around town. They were so realistic and creative. When our class stood before these paintings we were all absolutely quiet. We didn’t know what to say. We all knew we were experiencing something special. As an adult I haven’t pursued many of these experiences. I still appreciate art but it hasn’t been a passion or the sole reason for any of my trips. I have to admit though; just talking about these past interactions has brought about old feelings.

I think that art needs to be almost incomprehensible for me to be interested in it. I’m not referring to the interpretation but the how the art was created. I have an experience when I can’t think of where the idea came from the individual that created the piece. When I go to a concert, the concert shifts from entertainment when the musician does something with the instrument that I didn’t think was possible. The same rule applied with the Wyland paintings. As a kid I thought, “...painting on buildings is ILLEGAL!” He showed all of us that you can paint anywhere, and when the painting is outside, so many more people can enjoy it. Even though I was lucky enough to be exposed to great art, I wasn’t interested in creating it. I didn’t have the patience and art wasn’t a priority in my family. Neither one of my parents were artist. My dad sold pharmaceuticals and my mom was a waitress. We

went to the beach on Saturday, and the football games on Sunday.

The other huge barrier for me was how good art is so difficult to create. I didn't understand the process, the planning, the inspiration, the opportunity for error. No one pushed me to be an artist so I never worked at it. I did what my parents pushed me to do, get good grades and play football.

I think art is an extension of a person's most intimate self, to the physical world. As I get older, travel more, read more books, and meet more people, I'm learning that art is a mystery. Artists have this idea that is deep inside of them and they want to either bring it to real life for themselves, or bring it out and share it. They will try to create it however if the creation doesn't do the idea justice, they will have try again. An artist will do everything they can to bring this idea into reality. The idea is unique to the individual. Art is a creation. I guess the biggest change in my perception of art is that we should experience art without expectations. If you connect with someone, great. If not, that's ok too. Art is about the idea and the process.