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The Arts in STEM

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Art Autobiography

Recall: My first memories of art took place in pre-school. I vividly remember our teachers put yellow and red paint globs on a mirror and let us finger paint on the mirror. I loved getting dirty and squidding my fingers through the paint, and dragging my fingers along the mirror to see the clean shiny bits. The part that I struggled with was the actual “picture” part I always thought that I had to make or draw something that looked like everybody else’s. I believe that at this time, it was around Halloween or maybe the orange color of the paint reminded us of Halloween, however my neighbor had drawn a witch. So I followed suit. Once finished the teacher pressed a piece of construction paper to the mirror for a print. I was proud that mine looked like everybody else’s.

My mom also had me do water color paintings for my grandparents and aunts and uncles for Holiday cards, my favorite part was mixing the paint to see all the new colors. I have many memories of enjoying the exploration process of the different materials but when it came to the creation I was afraid that mine artwork wouldn’t be good enough.

Many of the same feelings come about with music and dance lessons as well, I loved the lesson and learning new things, moving my body in new ways but I was worried about how I sounded or looked compared to my peer group. I wanted to shine or at the very least not stand out for being different.

Another huge memory that had a big impact on me was visiting a museum, in early elementary school, that had a large exhibit of Georgia O' Keeffe's artwork. I really fell in love with her work and was drawn to her larger than life close ups. I think at that point I decided that only "professionals" could create such things of beauty.

Middle and high school was very much the same. I had dropped out of music and dance by the 6th grade and was always comparing myself to others when it came to the mandatory art classes that had to be completed. Don't get me wrong, I always enjoyed my time but I was never satisfied with the final product. I knew that I belonged in the sports scene. The field is where I felt most comfortable.

Reflect: As an adult I have learned that it takes a lot of practice to become an artist. As Macklemore states in his song Ten Thousand Hours "The greats weren't great because at birth they could paint, The greats were great because they paint a lot." When I look back, I see that everything that I have been "great" at I have worked my butt off to achieve. There is no reason for me to be great in the arts if I have never really committed my time to them. The arts were and still are not something that I am passionate about. I have learned to become more patient with myself; I have learned what mediums I am comfortable with, and I have learned to watch more, and copy strategies rather than final products. I am also more confident and mature in myself, and I know that I my art does not have to look like somebody else's. I know now that art takes planning and practice. Art takes risks. Everybody sees beauty in a different way. I want to be able to foster growth and confidence of all students in my class, not just the athletic ones.

Connect: Just like athletics the arts can be something very different for the people that peruse them. I now see art as a release. Artist participate in their craft to de-stress, to let out emotions and to communicate with themselves their needs. I also see art as a job or a career,

there is art all around us that has been created by somebody, to draw your attention, to make you feel comfortable, to raise an emotion. For example the Vietnamese Starbucks I am sitting in right now has the usual mermaid/ queen symbol that is familiar to people around the world. After moving abroad this symbol (art) now evokes safety, comfort, and reliability for me. Starbucks has hired an artist for not only their logo but also to help with creating their atmosphere. Arts can be something people peruse to better themselves. They can also be used as a status symbol. Art however can be something completely different for the typical definition. Art can be the beautiful Mountain View I saw outside of my dining room window as a child. Or the pot of curry my mom attempted to copy from her favorite cookbook. Or the way the snow was caught in the pine needles on the first snow of the season. Art is all around us. The lines are always blurred between art, and nature/function/and style.