

Art Autobiography

Donna Shartzer

The Arts in STEM: Advancing Meaningful Integration

Dr. Katherine Arnone

January 31, 2022

My Experiences

I love to dabble in being “crafty”, but I wouldn’t say I had the eye for it. I remember when I was younger and part of Girl’s Scouts, we would create things like vases, paper flowers, and clay ashtrays, and in fifth grade, a bus with keyboards came to our school and showed us some basic piano skills. That is also when I got a free instrument, a recorder, that I would try to play.

In junior high, I recall having an art class that I really enjoyed. I even entered some of my work, a sketch of a cowboy, and an abstract watercolor of two faces pieced together. I won a first and second place ribbon for these. I would get so into my art at times, I would even miss some of my classes because I wasn’t aware that the class change bell had rung. However, life for me at this time was chaotic. I moved around a lot.

In high school, I had a class labeled “Shop Class” but it really was a hodgepodge art class. I made a ceramic of a little girl with flowers in her hair and little animals, a string art of a sailboat, and I also remember making a copper typed image of a man doing something with his hands. Art was a way for me to rest from the not-so-good experiences in my life. I liked sketching landscapes mostly of mountains and snow. At least that’s what my doodles always seemed to turn into. It was hard for me just to create something. My ideas usually came from seeing something that I liked or something I heard. These experiences would generate an image in my mind and I would try to duplicate it in some form. Sometimes my ideas to create came through looking at others and their artwork.

In my college years, I had a ceramic class where I learned how to make pinch pots, coil pots, slab pots, and some other ceramics. When it came to the process I felt hindered by the technical aspects of structuring the pot or even choosing the glaze for it. I feel that I did have a few pieces that represented me, where I forgot the technical aspects and just tried to be abstract. I still have a few pieces. One that I like the most is a large square that was supposed to be ceramic tiles, but I liked how the tiles look together, kind of abstract, and I use it as a trivet in my kitchen today.

Today, I still enjoy art, but find I don't have much personal time to do things like sketching or painting. Instead I try to incorporate them in my Sunday School Classes and/or my science lessons. However, some of my students dislike drawing and coloring or even creating things. They don't want to put time into. I hope I can change some of their minds because many struggle with the stresses in their lives. Art can be an escape for them, at least for a little while.

Reflection

As I look back on my experiences with art, I found that my experiences in art were beneficial to me. I could get lost in the creative process, but struggled to be original in my art. It wasn't that I copied other pieces of art but struggled with the ideas to generate art. I had to have the image or music in my head and I didn't have a lot of experiences with various techniques or forms of art. This lack of experiences and that my life was always transient from one state to another didn't make the pursuit of art utmost in my mind. As an adult, I find that art is something I would like to pursue again. I believe I was somewhat successful in some of the artwork I created when I was younger. I like to create even if it's a cookie when I have plenty of time on my hands and

can take my time. Art is relaxing and peaceful to me. I don't want to feel like I have to do it. I also liked working with my hands and even playing music. It does take me a while to do things and I often have incomplete works of art. I think inspiration is the key for me. I need to feel it in order to create it. Life is so busy these days, I feel that I can't just let myself go. I still do creative things but not necessarily for myself, usually for others. I might crochet, decoupage a craft, etc. for someone else, but not usually for me. I would like to get back to sketching and recently at school we started something called, "Flex Fridays" where we get to offer a choice to students to choose from. I chose watercolor painting. Our watercolor topics are usually theme related, but it has definitely sparked that interest in me again to create. I'm excited about the next watercolor I do because I've been researching watercolor resistant painting with oil pastels.

Definition of Art

With my renewed interest in creating things with my hands and the access to simple materials and some time to be creative, art to me can be defined as a way to express your inner self. A way to let go, to relax and find peace. A way to evoke emotion. My view of art hasn't really changed, art is important and should be offered to students because art is what has helped me through the struggles I faced as a kid and even as an adult. It's calming, it's exciting and invigorating. I don't believe anything I create will ever be worth much, but I create with a lot of care and believe students feel similar. I also think at times art shouldn't be as structured in the school setting because many students need outlets to let go over the stress in their lives and art is a safe way for them to do this.