

Art Autobiography

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“Wow, she drew so many details and even clothes on her stick people in her drawing...her sister never did that”. When I was 3 or 4 years old, my parents said this when looking at a drawing I had done in preschool. That’s when they had noticed some of my creativeness. So I guess you could say that I was always artsy growing up. I remember going to Girl Scout camps that focused on art and participating in optional art shows at our school. My parents were teachers, and I grew up with an unlimited amount of art supplies and encouragement to create. My parents were so patient with me when I would ask to use odd materials to make art. I would use aluminum foil or trash items like yogurt containers, egg cartons, and even snow or mud to create!! My parents still have my pieces on their walls in their bedroom and on the Christmas tree to this day!



Because my parents were teachers, we, of course, had summers off. We spent every summer going camping in our RV or tent camping and traveling around the country. To this day, I have been to 35 of the 50 states. I was fortunate enough to get that early exposure and experience of seeing the beauty in nature and the art of other cultures and places. I looked at nature with wonder and as a work of art. I loved to find objects in nature and use them in my art, such as leaves, flowers, sticks, dead bugs, and even animal bones. I had the best rock collection around.

I loved my art teachers growing up, particularly my elementary art teacher, who I am still friends with today, and who I did my student teaching with 16 years ago. I loved how everything we did she found to be the most exciting project ever. Her excitement, of course, excited us and

helped give us the confidence to create!! She did the simplest projects with such enthusiasm. I also remember her doing such a variety of art and showing us how to use different mediums from landscapes and portraits to still life's, pottery, mosaics, and sculptures. We went from clay to fibers, watercolors to oil pastels, drawing, and printmaking! When I went onto the secondary levels of school, I took Home Ec, shop, and joined the school band, where I played the clarinet. I learned how to sew, culinary art, casting, woodturning, carving, and even welding!! Those classes were some of my favorites!!

When I went to Adams State College, I didn't know what I wanted to do as most students don't, and I fought the expectation that was put on me that I was going to be a teacher because both of my parents were, as well as my older sister. So, of course, I took general education classes the first two years and took a few art classes for "fun." But the more art classes I took, the more I wanted. So, in my third year, I decided I wanted to do art every day, and the best way to do that and get to travel the world was to become an art teacher. I knew I wanted more art classes than education classes, so I got my degree in Art. After graduation, I went back to finish the teacher education portion. I graduated from Adams State University in 2004 with a Bachelor's Degree in Art and with not just 2-3 emphasizes as most artists do, but with five (ceramics, painting, drawing, design, art history, and photography)!

I got hired straight out of college in a small farming rule community in Northeastern Colorado. I grew up in a small town, so this felt like "home" to me. I was hired to teach k-5th grade art at the two elementary schools in our town. Not only did I love teaching art to kids, but because I got to have each student for six years, it helped me to get to know them honestly. I loved that I would shape and mold the art experience from an early age. The ages when they aren't as afraid to try or fail. This was my dream coming true!! I wanted to teach children about

my love and passion for art, but I wanted to build relationships with them as individuals as I felt my art teachers did with me. Working at two Title 1 schools, building connections with kids, and creating trust, can make a huge difference in their success.

I knew I wanted to be excited to come in every day and be just as enthusiastic about what we were creating as my art teachers were with me. About five years in is typically when a teacher truly “settles” into their routine, teaching, and classroom management styles. My teaching was good, but as most people don’t know, specials teachers are often pushed to do more reading, writing, and math in our rooms, and over the years, it got to be less art and more of these subjects. I started not wanting to come to work, and I wasn’t enjoying my career anymore. So, instead of fighting it, I molded it into something that could benefit the kids and myself.

My past art teachers didn’t do much to help us in math, reading, or writing, so I looked at that as a direction I could try. As a student, I was weak in all of these areas and have a learning disability, Dyslexia. So, I thought, how could I help students like myself who were strong in art but weak in these other subjects to become stronger in them by using art as that bridge. Soon I was integrating the art world with math, reading, science, and writing. For example, I taught them to use a ruler and measure into my line unit, and possible careers use both an artist’s creative side and need to know the skill of measuring. I incorporated angles and protractors during my shape unit and reading and writing skills when critiquing and talking about art. Soon this ingratiating of other subjects spread into other areas, and I started to have more discussions with the classroom teachers in hopes that I could help with “state test scores” as well as help students to make connections from what they were learning in the classroom and into the art world. This progression in my teaching style and curriculum continued to develop better, and my administrators noticed and got even better when I became a parent myself.

It's sad to say, but classroom teachers now value me and what I do in my room more. They have told me that they can see the difference in their rooms. I feel successful and have been fortunate enough throughout my 16 years in this field so far that all of my administrators and my district have given me the freedom to choose what to teach and how to teach it. My district has also provided me with tools to better myself as a teacher and helped me progress to better our students. Now, if we could only get paid better...haha.

Art is a variety of human activities, mediums, techniques, and styles that result in a product. It involves creativity, beauty, emotional power, or conceptual ideas. Furthermore, art is subjective, as these ideas change over time.

Over the years in my life, pre-children and being less experienced than post-children and being a seasoned teacher hasn't shaped or changed my definition of art. However, the world has changed and technology. We went from the arts programs being the first to be cut in schools to now realizing that our kid's future needs the skills that art teaches. More critical thinking, problem-solving, communicating skills, perseverance, thinking outside of the box, and creativity are what our future generations need to be successful. Not the memorization of facts and the recalling of information like in years past.