

Well, I guess upon reflection I had quite a bit to say about the “art history” in my own journey. When I expanded the first question to double spaced, it was an epic novel! As I think back on my experiences in the arts, I remember my teachers’ names and the projects that were most impactful. There was ballet with Miss Linda, a classically trained ballet instructor who taught with love and kindness. Mrs. Keppel who resembled Aunt Bea and “let” me join the choir, as my mom was on the PTA- goodness knows, music is not my forte. I remember the student next to me saying I was “singing flat” and my college roommate who begged me to stop clapping ta-ta-tee-tee-ta in the middle of the night. The elementary art teacher, Mrs. Alexander had us create candle holders and hand-dipped candles to accompany them- mine still adorns the wall in my parents’ kitchen. Poor Mrs. Lord who patiently sat next to me week after week, while I hunted and pecked at the old piano keys. Practice? What practice?

Then there seems to be a void, either in the offerings or my memory. Somehow, in my middle school and high school years I don’t remember art...making... creating...constructing...and to acknowledge that, write it down and read it, seems strange. My mom is very crafty and I would make salt dough ornaments with her or work on my rug hooking kits making a puppy or rainbow or some other shaggy hot mess that really had no purpose, unless you were lucky enough to attach it to a pillow.

I really enjoyed both my college art class and music class (despite my lack of talent). I learned a great deal in both classes and kept the art textbook and several pieces well into my teaching career.

As an adult, I took several sewing classes that gave me the skills, techniques and freedom I needed to make my daughter’s baby blanket and bumpers (back when you were allowed to have bedding on the mattress).

Today, I find that I'm a good "copier". I love to look through Pinterest and create things that inspire me- home decor, cooking, gardening, holiday projects, etc. In some ways I'm artistic, in others crafty, and still others I like to think outside the box.

As I look over these lessons, projects and activities that shaped my art portfolio, I'm struck by the pride I felt when I was good at something, the joy and freedom to create something new, and the shame I carry to this day for misbehaving one day in ballet class. The things that didn't interest me- I didn't pursue, like piano and music. Of course, I was terrible at piano- I didn't practice and as much as I hoped to impress a very talented boy with my over the top piano playing skills, motivation was just not there to learn. I remember the songs, food and feelings that were part of my art narrative- whether good or bad- they make up the comfort foods, playlists and therapy sessions of my life. The disappointment of not getting parts or not putting forth my own best effort challenged me to do some soul searching- as too often we are our own worst critics. Not being good enough or being displeased with the final project or feeling frustrated after several attempts to get something just right, go hand in hand with perfectionism. The pressure to achieve unrealistic goals; the drive for perfection is unhealthy. I have learned to take a break, reevaluate what it is I'm trying to achieve and realize what healthy, realistic goals look like. I've learned to break things down into doable chunks.

Am I successful in art? I'm talented in some areas and there's room for growth in others. But again, when something is meaningful and has intrinsic value, we have the freedom to pursue the hows and whys to make it work- all the good stuff we want for students: positive failure, grit, determination, ingenuity, creativity, tenacity, collaboration, problem solving, reiteration are all pieces to the bigger puzzle. So, to that point I'm creative, a good copier and able to think outside

the box... am I an artist? Probably not. Am I comfortable in my own skin and with my own abilities? Absolutely.

What is art? I turned to google and Wikipdia- this is from Google-

1.

the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.

I think art is all encompassing, taking many forms- there's a wide variety of mediums and ways to express creativity. In today's innovator centric world; literally, the sky's the limit. With technology, we can blaze new trails and push the impossible boundaries. We recently had a mural painted in our building and the artist has another piece that is entirely interactive with the use of a QR code and technology. VanGogh, Beethoven, Gaughan, Baryshnikov are without a doubt artists in their own right, but so is the cookie lady that decorates intricacies on delectable baked goods, the furniture builder who uses raw resources to create items with function and purpose, as is the high school student who designs prom attire with duct tape and LED lights. Art inspires me to try new things or reach outside of my comfort zone. My past experiences have helped me to connect with art and appreciate its ability to ignite emotions and feelings. I recognize I'm drawn to different types of art- I love a good movie or an immersive art exhibit or let's be honest- a good cookie. I'm intrigued by people's creativity and innovation and appreciate their talent. Some art I don't understand- or don't know the back story. The VanGogh exhibit was here in Detroit. I liked the story behind the work, but at times, I found myself thinking- "eh, I could make that..." In closing, I think art is a means of expressing one's creativity, talent and drive to make something that is meaningful and unique.

