

I still can't color inside the lines. That's the first thought that it strikes me when I begin to write this, and it's the first thought that I have whenever my children work on their projects for school. Arts and crafts in elementary school was fun, but I don't think I ever made anything that was worth saving. I didn't dislike art, I just knew I wasn't good at it. I like good enough motor skills cut out pieces of paper without either cutting off too much or leaving too much paper outside of the line. I lack the discerning eye that my wife has of knowing where things should go or what proper placement would be. The numerous coloring books I had were just scribbled over with random colors. I look at my kids work now and realize what it was supposed to look like all along.

Most of traditional art career an arc of agreeable bewilderment. I never dislike what I was doing I come I just didn't really know why I was doing it. In middle school I enjoyed a ceramics class I took, but I didn't know why anyone would want a really mediocre vase. Even in 8<sup>th</sup> grade we're in an art class we had to take a picture and then draw it comment and we were taught to use a grid system, that significantly improved my work, but while I was proud of the end product it was not objectively good. I wasn't attached to any of these projects, but I tried as much as I could.

Creative writing is where I shined. I won some type of award in 5<sup>th</sup> grade although I can't remember exactly for what, but I remember projects where I had to write stories that I enjoyed. I didn't like every project I had to do. In 5<sup>th</sup> grade I remember having what I believe they would refer to now as a menu assignment where you had to pick a number of different activities instead of just writing a traditional book report. I hated every second of these, mainly because I never liked the books. I don't think there are a lot of books that would have been picked out in the late

90s for a 10-year-old boy in a school that they would have an affinity for, so I don't really blame anyone.

I did have a lot of success though when it came to projects that I had more autonomy over. There were a couple grades where I had to make a board game, and usually wound up in some type of creative leadership position. These weren't terribly original games: one was effectively a murder mystery based around our tech teacher, but they were playable and I remember the teachers being impressed. In AP English we were required to enter a schoolwide poetry contest that I somehow won. I was inspired by a recent falling out with a friend and was mostly motivated to win by the thought of getting to read it over the loudspeaker and really stick it to them, but that never came to pass.

Despite having some moderate success in these endeavors, I never enjoyed it. My schoolbag always felt heavier on days when I had a creative project due. For my first creative writing assignment in college, I remember writing about how it felt like I was in a war with words. I found solace in the Hemmingway (or at least attributed to Hemmingway) quote "Writing is easy. You just sit down at a typewriter and bleed." I worked at it laboriously and finally got to a place where I was happy with it. I became engrossed in film study and strongly considered pursuing a PhD in it. And then I had to write my thesis.

Over the course of two years I worked on "Revolution of the Dead: The New Zombie Apocalypse," a comprehensive treatise on the origin of zombie, their position as the first post modern monster, how they were originally used in the work of Romero, before exploring how their modification post 9/11 led them to their immense popularity peaking around 2012. The argument though simple took years off my to formulate: zombies are a metaphor for when people behave in a certain way, they become something less than human, and they only become

popular because they were transformed into a violent other that stands between the viewer and peace. My thesis is the piece that I am most proud of, and the last time I considered the arts.

I debated about putting this last experience in my autobiography as I am not quite sure if it qualifies. It was certainly difficult like all of my artistic pursuits. I did myself no favors: it is an entirely original idea with very little academic backing. My other work is that of a hack. I copy and steal and piece it altogether into something new but familiar. I have occasional pursuits, although it has gotten harder with children. I spent a few months writing a haiku every day. I've made two short movies with the help of my kids, and the occasional vlog type video for my students, but these are more crafts than art. My work has been cute, fun, and amusing, but not great with the exception of my thesis.

Art is about telling truth with fiction. Rather than tell your audience about life, you show them, making it impossible to ignore in the process. I have the utmost respect for artists. It is a job that can be studied and analyzed but is done by skilled individuals. It is the ultimate expression of self-actualization. It's a lofty definition, and one that would put my work outside of its grasp.