

The Importance of Being an Artist

- Kyra Veprek

If you had told me three years ago that I would voluntarily be taking an art elective, I would have laughed. Growing up, I was always a fan of coloring pages and would often brag about my ability to color in the lines. As I grew more competent, I began taking art classes at the Acorn Gallery and even believed I had a career in painting one day. The downfall came in middle school when we were assigned a self portrait project. The assignment was to draw a large scale free-hand portrait of your face according to your mirror reflection. Being the over-confident middle schooler most of us were, I was eager to show off to my peers my silver-key worthy masterpiece of a portrait; however, as I struggled to replicate the contours of my face and found myself with a drawing that only looked partially human, I realized I was poor at drawing. As I watched my peers produce works that took on some semblance of themselves, I developed a personal vendetta against drawing. From that point on, the pencil was not my friend, and I would not be in an art class if I had the choice.

After this brief history of my experience with art, I'm sure you can imagine my displeasure when finding out I was expected to develop a portfolio that contained "multiple forms of media" when applying for the architecture schools and programs I am interested in for college. For my love of the field, I sacrificed my study blocks to take an art class. In search of the class that I believed would take the least amount of artistic ability, I signed up for "CP1 Art Foundations," and found myself in this second-semester of junior year sitting in my first art class of high school. Our first major assignment was a large scale value drawing, which entailed copying a still-life set up for us in class and shading it according to what we saw. In the weeks leading up to this assignment, we had completed only small-scale contour drawings, which only required you to draw basic lines to represent images, meaning it was okay if your drawing looked like a random squiggle. Entering this class, I assumed there would eventually be some sort of large-scale drawing but my fear of creating a lopsided figure drawing that I would later be expected to shamefully share with the class kept me from feeling much enthusiasm; but, with the proper coaching from Ms. Branham, and my other less-confident desk-mates, I began to draw what would later become my favorite high school project.

I was cautious with the first steps of the illustration; drawing permanent lines that will later be presented as a final drawing is scary when you are not accustomed to this sort of commitment. With each class, however, I watched as these lines came together to make shapes and these shapes came together to somewhat represent the still life. Was my drawing accurate and proportional? No, not at all. But, I found myself looking forward to class each day because of the peace I found in drawing lines and shading. For one hour each day, I felt I was able to release any pent-up stress through this pencil onto paper at my own will. Art allows freedom that pretty much no other area of life offers; whether I want to draw in acute detail, or large scribbles, or with dots is my decision. And so I learned to cherish my every minute in CP1 Art Foundations.

There are a lot of lessons you could take from this story: never give up, do what you love, not what you're good at, always keep an open mind. The most important thing to take away from this, however, is that you need to make time for art. No matter what walk of life you are in, voluntarily focusing on something other than work is therapeutic. From coloring, to painting, to

doodling, to sculpting, creative activities work to lessen stress and promote confident thinking. Can I say my artistic abilities have improved? Eh, kind of. Can I say I've found my favorite cure for stress? Absolutely.