Why I “Art” Essay

About a few months ago, my mother told me how, when I was a kid, I told her I couldn’t draw and was rather set on that idea and wouldn’t take any other answer beside it. To this day, I have no memory of that happening, but it does sound like something I’d say. An artist is their own biggest critic, after all. I feel like I’ve always been someone who wants to make sure their hands are always constantly busy. I believe this is a habit I’ve picked up from my mom, as she always needs to be doing something, and only rests until absolutely everything is done.

Growing up with little-to-nothing, my mom somehow always found a way to scrape every last penny she had to host a little birthday party for my sister and me, as we both have birthdays relatively close to each other. One year, we decided on having our party theme being summer. My mom thought it would be a great idea to make beach ball shaped goodie bags for all of the kids, because you always need to make goodie bags for a party, at least in her book. We sat outside our little patio with balloons, streamers, and paper mache, ready to make these beach balls. After hours of work, we only managed to make three, and we were already exhausted. We needed almost thirty of them, so this clearly wasn’t going to work out. Rather than just giving up, she used the three beach balls we made and turned them into fork, knife, and spoon holders which the guests loved. I think this was one of my earliest realizations of how flexible creativity could truly be.

By the time Covid began to hit, we all found ourselves stuck inside our homes and trying to figure out what to do with our new found time. This allowed me to start dipping my

toes into possibly any medium I could to keep myself busy. I began painting rocks I found in my little backyard, trying to create a new personal art style, practicing my violin, working with clay to make random sculptures, writing songs, and making a puzzle out of cardboard and using a thumbtack to cut it out because I didn't have an exacto knife. Maybe I had too much time on my hands. There was so much I wanted to do, and now I could. While the world was busy hoarding toilet paper, I was holding onto the rolls people would throw away without a second glance, seeing them as new crafting material.

By the time school was back in session, I found myself constantly carrying a fat sketchbook in my backpack and taking it out whenever I had time to myself. I started becoming more shy and quiet, stuck with a group of friends who often left me out and made me feel like I was taking up space by simply existing. But of course, I held my tongue and just accepted this treatment. This became such a common habit for me to the point where I began heavily bottling up my emotions and developing migraines from my stress. Fun! Not having anyone to talk to about my problems, I went to the only source of comfort I knew, my sketchbook. I would just sit either on the floor or a table and draw, not speaking or looking at anyone else. A few yard duties' would often come up to me to ask if I was okay because "I looked sad". I would always tell them I was fine, and they'd leave it at that. They looked at me and saw on the outside just "sad". What they don't know is that my "sad" face was actually a look of concentration as I tried to sketch out new concept art for a character I was building. My art class became my second home, and my teacher kept pushing me to be more proud of myself and my work, even if I struggled with my own confidence.

Around this time is when I started getting back into theater arts once more. Before middle school, my prior theater experience was a small theater club I joined in elementary school, playing the Tortoise in Aesop's Fables. Our school was holding auditions for The Lion King Jr, and I thought that even if I was nervous, it wouldn't hurt to try out, especially since I knew a lot of people who were planning on auditioning too. This one choice was one of the key reasons I started doing choir and musical theater today. Musical theater has helped me to get out of my comfort zone and perform for a wider audience of people. It's to the point where I feel more anxious reading a paper out loud to the front of the class or asking a question, compared to memorizing an entire script and songs to perform in front of an entire audience. My favorite role I was ever given was during my junior year, where I played Beetlejuice in Beetlejuice Junior. I was given the instruction most of the time to just "do whatever I want" and I stuck with it, acting as weird and funny as I possibly could. Musical theater and choir have helped me gain more confidence with my singing on a personal level especially with the support I've received from my peers, and even my teachers about it. All of these different mediums I've grown fond of have all mixed together internally to help create who I am today. I feel more willing to put myself out there more rather than just wait around and hope for the best.

While making art in all of these ways, I never realized that this could be therapeutic. I started researching more about art therapy and considered becoming an art therapist myself. I took my first group art therapy session last year on my school's campus. It was a small group of students of all grade levels who would meet up together with a school

therapist weekly. We would all practice a different art medium and learn about the psychological benefits of practicing them. I had an amazing time each session learning about how music, drawing, sculpting, collages, and other creative practices are able to bring such comfort and personal connection to those who are engaging in them.

Ultimately, art is whatever allows me to be happy and the best version of myself. Art is the reason I'm here today typing this essay for this class, as my passion pushed me to apply to Freestyle. I will forever appreciate how much art has allowed me to not only grow, but express who I am as a person. From just one life lesson, a whole new world opened up for me to explore, and something is telling me I still have a few more things out there waiting for me to try.

Process Reflection

Our Core Values brainstorm was my personal starting point to coming up with ideas to write my essay. I knew I wanted to do something that combined all of my interests, so I settled with doing art. This brainstorm helped me come up with ideas and different stories to tell regarding my interests. It also helped me to be more open and even a little vulnerable with my writing. One of my biggest inspirations for my writing was Octavia Butler's "Shyness is Shit" because I related heavily to the way she described the feeling of being shy and how it impacted her throughout her whole life. I really loved how blunt she was with her wording, and I wanted to try and incorporate that into my own writing. My notebook pre-revision also helped me connect with George Orwell's "Why I Write", as his writing helped me realize that writers need to acknowledge their past to their readers in order to give them a better understanding of our motives for writing our essays. I think this was another thing that encouraged me to provide more context and

stories into my essay in order to create a clearer picture for my audience and explain to them why all of this matters. When I began writing on my doc, I incorporated comments mainly about my pacing, adding more details, and digging a little deeper into the personal aspects of my essay. I also began fixing the wording of some of my statements and the grammar of the essay. I thought I was “yapping too much" in my writing, but then I was actually told to “yap more” which gave me a bit of a confidence boost, as I didn’t feel like my writing was just “and this, then this”. My doc’s version history mainly points out previous ideas I didn’t quite phrase right or things that I should have added more to. I also added personal comments for myself to remind me of where I wanted this essay to go and what I wanted to say in that specific paragraph, or in the essay overall. I did comment about adding more conflict, but eventually scrapped it, as I didn’t really want to focus too much on the confidence part, but rather how each step into my art has led me to the next, and helped in shaping me into who I am today. Overall, my purpose in my essay was to