

As a young child, I meticulously followed online tutorials to recreate characters from My Little Pony and would find leaves from my backyard to try to replicate on paper. These creative pursuits weren't just hobbies; they were my earliest forms of self-expression.

During these formative years, my passion for art continued to grow stronger. Yet, it wasn't until I was an art instructor at Cal Color Academy that I comprehended the power of artistic expression. Within the first week in this role, I encountered a student who wouldn't follow along and always distract his peers. I consistently tried to keep him up with the rest of the class activities, yet my attempts proved futile. I realized he thrived on artistic freedom to draw subjects that captivated his interest, from dinosaurs to boats. I decided to give him that freedom so he could express himself. The transformation that followed, as he embraced the newfound space to create what he desired, resulted in a vivid canvas of growth. Watching his confidence blossom through his very own strokes of creativity inspired me to let loose in my art - student and teacher learning from each other!

Furthering my artistic journey, I enrolled in Freestyle Academy – a haven for creative spirits. The Academy explored various media, including Adobe apps, photography, and website design. Students of the Academy are also tasked with making the yearbook, and I assumed a prominent position in design and photography. My goal was to encapsulate the spirit of this exceptional program that I had the privilege to experience.

However, as my grandmother began to fall ill at the beginning of my senior year, I truly understood art's role in my life. Despite the gravity of the situation, my grandma, even as a blind woman, remained hopeful. She continued to sing and dance at the Indian Community Center, showcasing an unwavering spirit that deeply touched me. Just as my grandma found peace in the music and movement, she inspired me to find solace in art during challenging times.

My refuge in art lies not in the process itself but in witnessing it come together through the final brushstrokes and flecks of paint. When I become frustrated while making a piece, it leads to personal growth, yet completed work gives me confidence. Although conversations about creative burnout are frequent with those in artistic fields, I've never personally resonated with those. Whenever I encounter inspiration in my daily surroundings, I scramble to jot it down to bring it to life through vivid colors later. By observing the small subtleties, such as how the light and shadows hit a particular object, its shape, and imperfections, I have gained a renewed outlook on the simple life around me.

Recently, I stumbled upon a figure drawing art session attended mainly by adults. In this setting, a model takes the center, striking various poses while the artists attending capture the scene through their perspective. This experience was refreshing, especially as most of my peers from previous art classes were younger than me. The figure drawing session introduced me to a circle of people whose opinions I valued to critique my art. As a result, my live drawing skills led to a noticeable improvement.

Through my artistic journey, I have learned that art transcends the canvas; it can enrich lives and ignite confidence in ourselves and others. The path of creativity will always be my pursuit. Each chapter of my life has been a brushstroke, contributing to the canvas of my creative journey. As I continue exploring new artistic horizons, I am grateful for art's meaningful impact on who I am today.