

My Art Journey

By Ziah Daily '20

“Every child is an artist, the problem is how to remain an artist once we grow up.” This was a quote written by one of the most famous artists of all time — Pablo Picasso. Picasso grew up and fell in love with art in Barcelona, Spain. From a very young age he was groomed by his father, a professor of drawing, to be an artist.

Although I would not quite consider myself worthy of comparison to Picasso, similar to him I have grown up around art. From spending nights at a Mexican restaurant eating chicken quesadillas with my mom while she painted colorful figures on the wall, to coming to shoot pictures with her at weddings, I have always been around art. One might say that due to this I became an art child. I remember insisting that we go to my mom's' art studio multiple times a day hoping that I would get a chance to watch my mom paint with deep blue, yellow and orange strokes on a blank canvas, making something that once appeared plain... alive and bursting with color.

Since, from birth, I watched my mom express her love through art, as soon as I could walk, I started to make some of my own. For me, art started as drawing and painting in school. I was always the child eager to get my hands on a paintbrush or some type of writing utensil. I was the child always asking “when is art time?” I was the child that got called out a couple of times for drawing on her hw. But most importantly, I was the child that always saw life as an artist did a new canvas—waiting to be painted by those willing to paint.

When I was seven my mom surprised me with my first official art classes at Pratt fine arts center. I began by drawing comics and doodling on paper. I remember some of my very first comics and oohwie... they were bad. I experimented with all the different grades of pencils. I loved seeing how some made darker marks than others and how different shades reacted to being smudged. After about a year of these classes, I considered myself to be a pro. I knew what shades to use for what emotion I was trying to convey along with what the intensity each would bring, so I decided that it was time I found something new. I had heard that Pratt had a whole range of art classes in the summer and immediately decided that that is what I would do next.

Through the school year I spent my time hanging out with friends and working with my mom on our plot at the neighborhood P-patch. During the summer I would take art classes on painting and my new found love of jewelry making. While transitioning in and out of summer, I started to recognize that art was all around me. It wasn't just in the artificially made paint, which don't get me wrong is very fun, and the metal machinery that assisted me while making jewelry, it was about the nature and people around you. From every strangely shaped orange carrot that I pulled up from the ground, to every person that walked by the neighborhood P-patch in their overalls to say hello. Art was everywhere, if I only had the eye to look for it.

One day, one of my friends asked me if I wanted to participate in something called Union street endless hopscotch where artists from around the central district banded together to create a unifying art piece--an endless game of hopscotch. I spent hours with others, using environmentally safe paint in order to create a masterpiece that stretched from one side of the Central District to the other. Unlike other

projects, this led me to the realization that art can include multiple people and in addition, it can be a part of something bigger.

Just as I was becoming aware of all the possibilities a group of adults that came to speak at my elementary school. I was in fourth grade, around nine years old, when I first heard about an organization called Coyote Central. I heard about opportunities involving cooking, baking, designing, sewing, writing, singing, welding, woodworking, computer coding, drawing, origami making, song writing, glass blowing, jewelry making, photography, Robotics, breakdancing, and one of the most eye catching—magic!!!! I was immediately hooked. People from all over the Central District and the Greater Seattle area gathered in one building, at the same time, to make art. I wasn't old enough yet to apply for the program but as soon as went into 5th grade I took my very first class, something that seemed somewhat familiar in this new and exciting environment— Jewelry making. I remember stepping into the room and instantly feeling welcomed by the teachers and students.

Since then I have taken practically every class except bike making, which I made my cousin take, and one type of robotics. I learned skills in every class and including the 8 times that I took magic.

Growing out of being able to take classes at this organization was one of the hardest things I have done. But, Coyote has been there for me as I have grown up, and continues to be there for me whenever I need it. After taking nearly all of their classes, I have been a part of coyote centrals auction for the past 4-5 years in a row and am now a part of their youth advisory board and Ethics and Inclusion Committee. Doing these things has allowed me to continue to work with an organization that made me who I am today. It has also provided me with a platform where I can help in creating the new generation of curious and creative young people.

With Coyote, I had the amazing opportunity to create an art piece that was hung at the Columbia city Art gallery, representing who I am, and then have a dance class interpret it. This art piece was based on the art style papel picado, which is a mexican style in where one cuts out shapes in order to create a larger image. A lot of work went into cutting out each individual shape. Every week on Saturdays I would go into coyote to work on the piece. I almost didn't have enough time to finish. Although the time constraint was a little bit stressful, art calms me down so there was almost no stress at all. But by far, the best of the entire process was when I got to see younger kids interpreting my art piece through dance. This was one of the most amazing experiences of my life. Seeing my art, come to life.... With each movement that the dancers took. was breathtaking.

In addition to this, Coyote has allowed me to branch out and be part of a bigger network of art and creativity, particularly among youth. This is when I first heard about the Northwest African Museum curatorship or NAAM.

I started working with NAAM last year. During the curatorship we had professional photographers come in and show us all that we needed to know about using cameras, from the composition of the photograph to the lighting. Sadly since my mom's old camera had gotten stolen a while back, this was a refresher. During this process we had the chance to learn more about the civil rights movement, specifically in Seattle. For example, we learned about how Elmer Dickson one of many people apart of the Black Panther Party had a large role at Garfield high school in continuing this movement. Then, we continued on to learning about the history of the Northwest African American Museum. We learned about all of the man and woman power of those it took to make the museum what it is today, including

the powerful black leaders and some amazing allies. I took a series of photographs all under the main idea of “things in Seattle that are important to me,” and after learning all of the history behind NAAM and Elmer Dickson and Garfield High School I decided to photograph them. The third photo that I took was of a Uprep alumni, Elishiba Johnson, that now works with youth and art, both of which are important to me.

I was lucky enough to have MOHAI show one of the photographs and NAAM showed the series of them.

I continue to have an amazing art journey. From drawing comics to having my photographs in museums. I will forever be grateful for those who have helped me along the way. Currently I am finishing another NAAM curatorship but instead we are making a PSA about the World famous Seattle Born Jimi Hendrix. I had the honor of meeting with one of Jimi’s oldest friends and his sister Janie Hendrix. In addition, I am now a part of The Museum of History and Industry Youth Advisory.

Although I will definitely continue with my own art, I'm now equally, if not more committed to sharing my knowledge with the younger generations and curating art shows. At the end of it all, my only hope is with all of this knowledge, I am able to pass it down like Picasso did his art.

Thank you.