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Personal Art History

There have been combinations of events and teachers that have shaped me, my views on art teaching, and how I came to being an art educator. I have to establish first that I've always wanted to be an art teacher. My only other aspiration was to live on Sesame Street.

I grew up in a military family that moved every four years, until we landed in Georgia and my father retired. I have to place my parents as my first art educators. They noticed that I was interested in art and made sure that I had art experiences in every place we lived or visited. When we moved they found the art museums and took me to see the art. They grew to like art for themselves and now collect Black Art and buffalo soldier art. My mother tells me that she knew she had an artist on her hands when I painted my bedroom furniture one night with my church shoe polish. I was four. I stayed up all night painting and then she made me wash it off. My prize for behaving on our big plane ride to Korea was an art set. It was place to make and keep my art.

When we moved back to the states my parents bought our new house from the art teacher at my new school. She was fantastic and her house was fantastic. To me, she was lucky because she got to spend the entire day in the art room, her life was full of art materials, and art teachers lived in wonderful places. I fell completely in love with the idea of being an art teacher. When I was in the fourth grade, she included my painting of birds in the school art show; I felt confirmation that I was going to make it as an artist.

My head came out of the clouds when I moved to Texas. The school allowed me to test out of reading, so I was a band and art student. I had an art teacher that took us through very methodical lessons. It wasn't about fun or being creative, but about mastering the material. She would give us the lesson and then go back to her desk. I do not remember her giving us a lot of feedback while we worked, but when we got our art back, it was never the same piece that we got back. Today, one of my personal art teaching rules is not retouching my students work came from her. We would turn in our work and get back a touched up version. My middle school experience of art was changed when we moved again to a middle school system without the choice to have art all year long. I was told that art and music was too much art for one person. I chose to stay in band, but continued drawing.

My art education took off in high school. I tried to learn as much as possible to get ready as a future art educator and artist. Mr. Bennett wanted us to be our own artists. He took us through lots of exercises on techniques, but allowed us to be ourselves with our art making.

He brought in his own work and taught us to talk about our work. It was in high school that I found color and line as major elements for me as an artist. I look at Mr. Bennett as the first teacher to teach me how to teach for the artists my students will become.

Enrolling as an art education major was a proud moment of the path to becoming a teacher. The environment of being in art school was a place that I could focus on being an artist and take notes of how I could teach my future students from the lessons I learned about being an artist. Developing my style, researching artists and cultures, and trying new materials and ways of working led me to being a multi-media artist. I am now working as an artist who teaches art. I talk to my students about what it means to be an artist and how artists work. I try to balance their technical skills with opportunities to be creative and experiment. I really love what I do.