

# Artist Reflection

By: Madie Skinner

In sixth grade I went to the store to buy acrylic paint and paintbrushes. I painted messy sunflowers in a lined notebook. From sixth to twelfth grade, I made it a daily ritual to draw. Every few weeks I would start a new painting. I was growing my skills and I quickly realized that it brought me more happiness than most things. With no lessons or help, I built a skill that is stronger than anything else I've tried. Art is my passion. Art is my life. Art is the reason I exist. There is nothing else I want to do more than be an artist—the process, time, focus, the painstaking hours spent perfecting a single spot, I have a love for it all. It has been an outlet for me in many ways, it helps me think and take a breather, and it also helps my discipline and grow my understanding of art, and knowledge of my skill. I have been told I am lucky. Lucky I have known where I wanted to go to college since I was a freshman in high school. Lucky that I have found my passion in life. I am extremely grateful for art. It has taught me to love myself, and it has given me a reason to go to school and get a job.

I started taking serious art classes in high school. The 'Intro to art' and 'drawing and painting' classes were frustrating. I felt the constraints of these early courses confined me, holding me back as if I was a child. But when I entered the AP art class, I found a place where I truly belonged. The challenges were more rigorous and the expectations higher, but so was the sense of purpose. I was pushed to explore new techniques, ideas, and styles, and through it all, I grew exponentially as an artist. I am deeply thankful for my art teacher and classmates. Their work, their critique, and their encouragement are so meaningful. I find that in the art room, as well as theater, I feel the most at home. There is a sense of freedom and positive self-expression that is rare to find in other environments, that I often feel sorry for the students who never experience these spaces of belonging during a stressful day.

As a child, I always felt like an outsider. I was constantly urged to conform, to be like the other kids. I struggled with math and science, then I would go home and build a house out of cardboard for my stuffed animals. At the age of 11, I felt pulled towards something I could not grasp yet. It was a quiet ache for a form of expression that seemed just out of reach. So, I made art. I let my hands create the world I could not yet understand, and in the process, I found something bigger than myself. Art became my voice, a way to navigate the uncertainty and the confusion of being human. I can't easily express my appreciation for finding my passion for art. I have grown so much as an artist while in high school, and I am eager to bring my knowledge from my art classes into the next creative chapter of my creative life.