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Creative Annotation

12/12/19

When trying to decide what project to create for the creative annotation I went back and read some of the personal reflection I wrote in the beginning of the year. I wanted to be thinking about the ideas, concerns and hopes I had originally outlined for myself. What I really discovered through that reflection was my creative side wasn’t something that only existed because I was young, but rather was just left behind and ignored. My goal for this semester was to try to rekindle the relationship with my creative side and allow myself the space to explore and be kind to myself through the process. With all of this in mind, I kept coming back to two thoughts. First off, I knew I wanted to incorporate color. The beauty of colors on their own and together is something that has always been fascinating to me and something I have been extremely drawn towards. Large boxes of crayons, bright paint sets, sticky notes are all examples of materials that I have loved working with because of their vibrant colors. An item that I have always loved staring at and collecting are paint strips. The way they show the gradient of one color is really beautiful to me, so I wanted to find a way to incorporate them. Second, I kept coming back to many of Cameron’s ideas in *The Artist’s Way.* I hadn’t yet tried the morning pages, but they were something that I did really think I would find useful so I decided to try to incorporate free writing into this project as well. What I ended up landing on was the idea to use the paint strips and the colors they portray to express emotions, thoughts, concerns, worries and really anything I was feeling at the time. This process and the use of the journal changed a little bit throughout the semester, but it being a space for me to think creatively and also take time for myself remained the same.

While creating this book, certain readings, videos, and articles impacted individual pages in the journal and the overall theme of the color journal as well. In particular, Kelli Anderson’s TED Talk on “Design to Challenge Reality” really impacted the way I was thinking about using paint strips. I loved the way she took something that always looks pretty much the same, the Save the Date, and completely reworked the way it was created to create a record player. Building and creating is such an interesting way to use your creative mind and make something that is so interesting. When talking about her process Anderson has this line that I absolutely loved, she says “I was so excited to have uncovered this hidden talent of paper in the process.” This was a theme I tried to bring with me throughout my creation process. Paint strips are something that people think have just one use. They help people decide on the paint color either a wall color or furniture piece. I wanted to “uncover a hidden talent” of the paint strips and use them for a totally different creative process. Looking through the final product and the amount of ways I used the strips, I really believe that I did successfully complete this goal. I used the colors to draw out different emotions, I related them to songs, used them to depict science fiction stories, as inspiration and to depict colors found in nature. It was such an interesting experience getting to think about one object in so many different ways.

I keep coming back to Cameron’s ideas a lot as well, specifically the Artist Date and the Morning Pages ideas. They both opened my eyes to the fact that I hadn’t been making space for creativity and this was one of my biggest pitfalls in the path I have taken away from creativity over the past couple of years. I actually postponed my first Artist Date two different times because different things came up, I was tired, I just didn’t feel like doing it, any excuse you can think of really. Once I actually went I realized how important it was for me to make this space. The journal acted as a standing artist date for me through the creation process. I would put everything else to the side and just let myself explore. I got better as the semester went on to block out other distractions and really making it a time just for myself. This is something I really am going to focus on continuing throughout the next semester and even past that. I need that protected time for myself and need to work to make sure I follow through. The Morning Pages aspect of this journal was also something I really looked forward to. I realized that sometimes my favorite part of our class was the exercises where we were given time to free write. It is something I hadn’t done in such a long time and it’s a really good way for me to think through emotions and events happening in my life. There might be a time in my life where I actually follow the exact directions for morning pages daily, but for now this is a really good way for me to incorporate some free writing into my life.

One more general theme that was so present throughout my journal was the influence of wellness, healing and mental health. I was so glad we decided as a class to touch on this topic because it’s not talked about as much as it should be and it impacts every single one of us daily. I talk about my emotions and where I am at the moment of writing on almost every page. I felt like being honest with what I was feeling and going from there, either to write about it and work through it or just acknowledge it and use the space to get my mind off it and be creative in another way. One of the articles that our classmates found for us to read by Cathy Malchiodi is about the importance of creativity as a wellness practice. Cathy says at one point, “I made the bold statement that ‘making art...may be as important to your health as balanced nutrition, regular exercise or meditation.” She later goes on to list specific studies that also back up this claim. I completely believe this statement. I personally believe that mental health is something that is ignored to a harmful level. I am personally a culprit of this. I tend to keep myself running at over one hundred percent to ignore how I’m actually feeling or what is causing anxiety in my life until I reach a breaking point where it all comes out. It is so much healthier to take time to create or express yourself through creativity before it gets to this point. Taking the time in this journal to just acknowledge myself and be gentle created such a great outlet to work through things before they hit that boiling point. In the past, I have used yoga, horseback riding, and playing lacrosse as other techniques for bringing this aspect of wellness into my life mixed with creativity. Yoga and horseback riding specifically are very artistic sports that have quite a meditative piece involved because of the amount of time you spend lost in your own individual thoughts and creating. In my journal, I specifically talk at different points about lacrosse and horseback riding and different memories that were sparked by colors. While I was writing about these experiences and how they relate to creativity I kept thinking about the Meredith Monk chapter and how she writes about dance. I really admire the way she talks about the interdisciplinary approach she takes to dance and how movement is just one piece of it. When she speaks about dance like this it really highlights the artistic aspects that people often forget about. I have been thinking so much after reading this chapter about how I gave up on all of those outlets too, which were also creative outlets for me. I need to somehow incorporate a physically creative outlet back into my life as well. Yoga is something that I really want to push myself back into practicing. It has had such incredible benefits for me and it another outlet that I need back in my life.

Moving away from general themes throughout my journal and on to more specific pages in my journal that really closely related to specific topics and readings we discussed. I was on the team in class that designed the class surrounding the idea of Science Fiction and Creativity. I have recently developed a strong interest in science fiction and was really excited to look at different Sci Fi readings and how they relate to creativity. I loved exploring the creative writings of Padgett and Lem’s and I think the class really enjoyed them as well. Looking at massive role creativity has in Science Fiction, where writers are sometimes creating an alternate universe and have to think through and create every aspect of this place. I think it’s just brilliant and so entertaining. At one point in class we talked about Harry Potter and how so many of our classmates felt strong connections to the series and more so that series than other Sci Fi series. Harry Potter has been massively influential in my life. It’s my favorite series by far and I have spent hours researching everything you can know about the stories and theories and fan pages. When I got home from class that night, I felt the need to create and wanted to involve Harry Potter somehow in this process. I took two pages in my journal to explore the colors involved in the Harry Potter Series. The colors provide me with so much comfort. I often come back to these books when I feel the need to escape reality for a bit and they have become such a safe place for me. I think that might be the draw to Science Fiction, at least for me. I have the chance to completely leave behind the reality we live in, in exchange for this wild, different reality. I hope to explore even more science fiction and maybe even try my hand at creating some science fiction of my own? That idea scares me a bit since I have always considered my own writing a bit weak, but practicing is the only way to get better!

In my color journal on the last page, I wrote about moments in my past that shaped my creative journey that were linked closely with colors. I wanted to have my last page for the semester be something that I could come back to for inspiration when I felt I needed it. One of the stories I wrote was about when I created a St. Patrick’s Day napkin holder out of styrofoam. This very loosely reminded me of the Kamen interview we watched. He talks about his journey of creating and how it started when he was a young boy. It really made me reflect on my past and I’ve written about this a lot now, but how much I used to create especially when young compared to where I am now. I hope that I can continue to think about these stories from my childhood that I hold so dearly and continue to use them as fuel to keep pushing me forward. I believe one of my best traits is my curiosity and if I let myself continue tinkering and building I could create some really cool stuff. That interview was one of my favorites out of all the readings and videos we read and watched this semester.

One of our classes focused on the spiritual perspectives of creativity. My journal alludes to my faith a couple times, but I never really went into depth in any entry about my personal relationship with my faith. When I was reviewing the syllabus before writing this annotation I honestly was shocked that my journal didn’t include more about my faith. It’s such a big part of my life and who I am that it was surprising to me I didn’t take time to write about it and really didn’t even think about writing more in depth about it. At first, I was a little disappointed with myself and questioned if I wasn’t practicing my faith deep enough, but the more I thought about it, I don’t think that’s the answer. What I think was going on is even after going through the spiritual perspective readings the first time, I didn’t think about how they relate to my faith and my creativity. In class that week, I had thought about how as a Catholic I should spend more time acknowledging the gifts I have been given by God. They should be shared through creative ways and to restrain those is restraining a gift that wasn’t meant to be. I have been trying to use my creative talents more, but I didn’t spend enough time linking this directly with my own faith. I didn’t think about how my personal faith was also a creative outlet. I actually went back and reread some of the spiritual perspective readings to try to gain some inspiration. I kept coming back to David’s introduction chapter and the line “Go and study.” To understand my faith in a creative way, the only option I have is to go and study. I want to build this connection with my faith and creativity and I have to go and study to build it. When I look through my journal this is the only area that I really feel is lacking and that I hope to continue working on building after this course with the help and guide of the journal. Colors have such an important role in faith, specifically the Catholic Church, and I think that would be a really interesting direction to take. This was the one area that I did feel like my journal was missing part of me and my creativity.

We were told to work on this assignment until we got something. I must admit I had no idea what that meant until I started writing. It became so obvious that I had cut off so many creative outlets in my life and was ignoring the creative side of things like my spirituality. I think there are so many reasons this was happening. Some of it was my own naivety, some of it laziness, and some of it not being gentle enough on myself to let myself explore, but what I do know for sure is that I'm so glad I have taken the first step to reconnecting with my creative side. I really agree with David’s suggestion to make goals to keep yourself moving forward. I know that this is going to be a long process, so I’m going to make some goals specifically relating to my color journal to continue the process and to finish off this annotation. This was a process that I not only enjoyed, but I’m also very thankful for. I came into the class not really knowing what to expect and was a bit apprehensive, but am now extremely grateful for everything I have learned and that this is just the beginning of the process back to creativity.

Goals for Next Semester:

* Continue writing in the color journal weekly
* Find a way to write about the creative side of your spirituality and find the more personal connection between the two
* Continue daily searching for interesting colors in your life that make it more beautiful
* Validate your emotions in this journal and always let it be a judgement free zone
* Create something new with the paint strips ( in the journal or outside of it)
* Find uninterrupted time and space when writing in this journal
* Be and Let be!