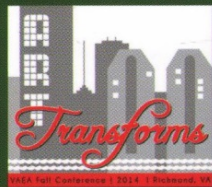


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Virginia **art** Education Association

FALL 2014

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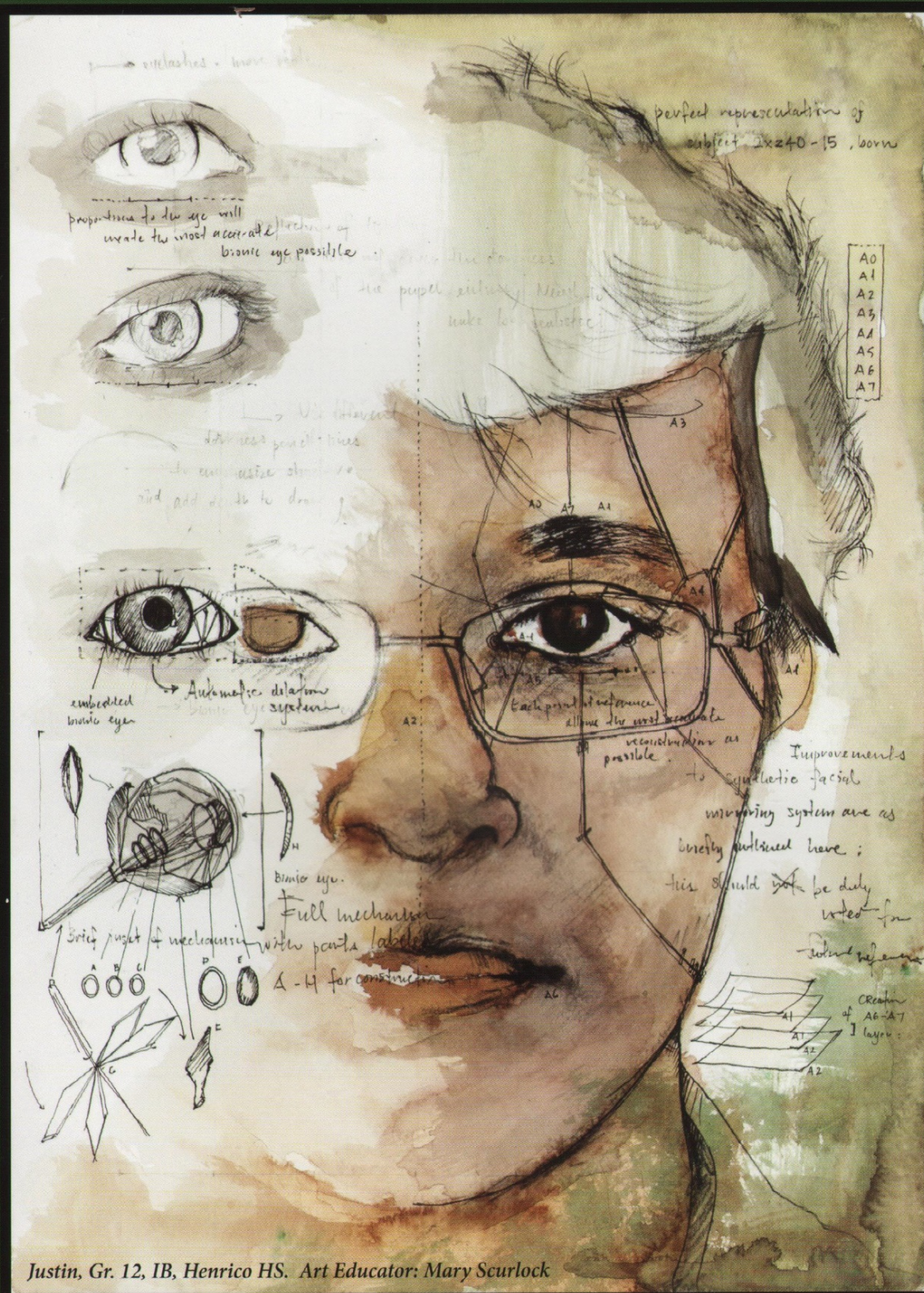
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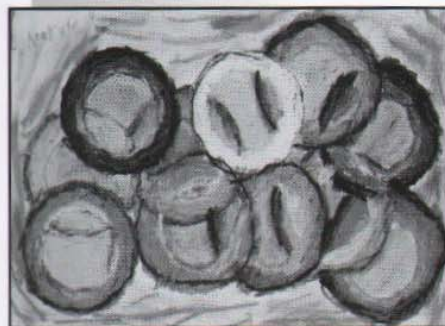
Artist Statements as Advocacy

Cyndi Wells

In our May issue, I wrote about sharing stories from classrooms through websites and social media as an advocacy tool. As we begin a new school year, I'd like to share another tool I have been using in Albemarle County for the past four years to give students a voice in our artshows: artist statements. As a classroom teacher, you are privy to the journey upon which students travel when creating works of art. **Uncovering thoughtful student perseverance through the creative problem-solving process, and having them communicate about it, can be a powerful advocacy tool.**

Including artist statements as an integral component of artshows didn't happen overnight. We began by talking as a team of art specialists about the need to uncover the process behind the final products (works of art) on display at our annual artshow. Next, we came to consensus about the qualities of an effective artist statement. That first year all levels K-12 agreed to include a few statements with select artwork on our display panels -- the positive feedback from the public convinced us they were worth the extra effort they took to include. After only four years, one of our division-wide artshows featured a printed program with photos of artwork and artist statements!

What better way to convince you of the impact of artist statements than to include some along with beautiful artwork created by Albemarle County students (included with permission below). I will ask you to first look at the artwork, *then* read the statements. Notice how the impact of the artwork is strengthened by the artist statements:



**Anna Kate, Grade 3,
Stone-Robinson
Elementary School**
Title: *The Rings of Hope*
Medium: Oil Pastel

Artist Statement:
"The movie *Super Buddies* inspired me because several rings made up a whole colony of hope for survival. I thought if I could take this movie to a different level I could turn it into the rings of hope instead of a whole big movie."

Note: Several of these student art works can be found in full color in the Student Art Gallery (center spread) or on the back cover.



**Manuela, Grade 4, Cale
Elementary School**
Title: *Cubist Portrait*
Medium: Tempera

Artist Statement:
"Pablo Picasso is an artist whose native language was Spanish, like my family and I. He lived in a very difficult period in his country Spain. He used his art to express his dissatisfaction with what was happening. He was one of the major exponents of cubism, a form of art. My work is not just a simple copy of his style; I did it as a special tribute to this character of the history of art that reminds me of the goodness of my Hispanic roots."



**Jessica, Grade 7,
Henley Middle School**
Title: *Landscape*
Medium: Acrylic Paint on Canvas

Artist Statement:
"I chose to write about my painting because it is what I am most proud of. It also took me a very long time to finish this piece. I sketched the background, painted it, sketched some more, painted more, etc. When I finished painting, I put glaze on top of the paint. This painting was inspired by photographer Ansel Adams. I actually painted a portion of one of his photographic images. During this project I learned about contour lines and light and shadow. I challenged myself with this piece by sketching and sketching again, and then erasing and starting over with parts of the painting. If I were to do another piece like this, I would probably try using color."



**Hannah, Grade 8,
Walton Middle School**
Title: n/a
Medium: Block Print

Artist Statement:
"I made this piece not from the romantic point of view, but more of family love. This was more in dedication of my Dad who passed away when I seven. I was heartbroken. I decided not to use the more usual heart symbol for this project, but the actual human heart to represent that my love for my Dad is real and will never change, no matter what."



**Nellie, Grade 10,
Monticello High School**
Title: n/a
Medium: Giclee

Artist Statement:

"While walking around Carter Mountain, I noticed the way the afternoon sun was hitting everything on the mountain at an angle. I got down low and used a wider aperture, both to get a shallow depth of field and to be able to use a fast shutter speed, which would keep the picture sharp. I really like how the light shines through the leaf and slightly highlights the spider webs on the dead plant."

Now that you've read examples of artist statements from elementary, middle, and high school, I'm curious: Do you have a deeper appreciation for the artwork, the artist, and the thoughtfulness behind the artwork included here? Did any of the statements inspire you to pause and look more deeply at the work? Do you see how these statements are a form of advocacy?

Carving out time for students to pause, reflect, and write artist statements benefits everyone – students, parents, the community, and your program! While it may not be easy to get started, I hope you have seen here it's well worth the effort. As you start to try them out, please share some example artist statements with us at: advocacy@vaea.org. I'd love to include some examples from around the state in my next article!



**Matthew, Grade 12,
Albemarle High School**
Title: *Identity Sculpture*
Medium: Stoneware Cone 6

Artist Statement:

"Clay gives me an outlet. I see clay not as just a material, but a piece of art waiting to be set free. I try to incorporate engineering into my pieces to push the limits of the clay. Being able to sit down and release a piece from clay in the most interesting and innovative way possible is what gives me such a love of clay."

Policy Update

Barbara Laws

When you receive this newsletter, we will once again be starting a new year and with that comes new opportunities to connect meaningfully with folks outside of our profession. As you are planning your activities that bring in parents and the community and putting up art exhibitions, keep in mind that part of your advocacy and influencing of supporters and decision makers is to communicate clearly and briefly about the purposes of your program and the impact it has on students.

It is also important to develop relationships with decision makers and potential supporters and the beginning of school is the perfect time to do it. Think strategically about engaging these folks. Have your "elevator" spiel prepared and look for opportunities to communicate it to your representatives, school board members and other stakeholders. VAEA position statements, including guidelines for elementary and middle and high schools, are located on the VAEA website. Additional position statements and resources are provided by NAEA at www.arteducators.org.

As we move toward the winter, be aware that, although 2015 is a General Assembly short session year, some of the same topics, including the expansion of time allocated for physical activity, may be revisited. Please be on the lookout for VAEA emails which will direct you to our website on which Virginia Coalition for Fine Arts Education information is also located. Now is the time to be developing a relationship with stakeholders so that if you need them you

will be communicating with someone whom you know rather than asking a favor and introducing yourself at the same time.

Together we can make a difference for our students!



**Malik, Gr. 12, Henrico
Center for the Arts.**
Art Educator: Mary Scurlock