Art is Created Through Harmony

Always being "the art kid" at school, I loved drawing everywhere: in my sketchbook, in my notebook, and even in my textbooks. However, because I was also "the shy girl," I wasn't used to drawing with someone else, which meant I didn't have the chance to get others' advice. I didn't even feel the need to, because I had the strange confidence that my painting approach, color choices, and style were all original and perfect the way they were and didn't need any changes. I wanted to improve more, but I wasn't willing to take in others' techniques. I used to think that art must be created independently, and that copying others would be proof that I didn't like my own art style. My pride didn't allow that.

However, it was when I joined the art club in eighth grade that things would never be the same. I joined the club mainly because I wanted to use professional art supplies. I thought I would be able to concentrate on improving my own work, but what I got there was something different from my expectation. Ms. Barger, the art teacher, split us into three groups and gave us a huge canvas, along with the theme, "Sky and Hand."

I was placed in a group with students who had totally different cultural backgrounds to me, and my nervousness was off the charts. I had never done a group project before, so I thought that it would be impossible for me to share my artistic values with others, and was afraid that I wouldn't be "original" by embracing other views. However, the experience turned out to be quite different.

Despite my worries, the group work started right away. What we came up with first was to paint the clouds as the main focus in contrast with the other groups who were putting the hand at the center. After that, each of our ideas mixed together like magic. When I came up with the idea to draw a floating castle inside the clouds, another member had an idea to add an Asian-style castle next to it, to show her own cultural identity. That inspired the other girls. They started adding the Taj Mahal, the Eiffel Tower, a bamboo bush, and other features, which all originated from their cultures.

Similar happy accidents occurred throughout the project, and I became certain that this piece would become a true masterpiece. Because each one of us had our own art style, which was shaped by our life experiences, values, and personalities, each one of our distinctive cultures blended together as one style in this mural. We all absorbed each others' uniqueness into our collective style naturally, making our art better. This was when I experienced the importance of accepting other cultures and perspectives.

From that day on, my thoughts changed. I learned that collaborating with others and incorporating their techniques into mine didn't necessarily mean that I was abandoning my original style. Taking in things that I could never experience on my own, gave a new stimulation to my art. I used to be trapped in my own art style, but now, I'm embracing a wide variety of different styles, coloring techniques, and cultural perspectives. And it didn't just stop with my sense of art. From that experience, I've always tried to keep in mind that others' ideas are often irreplaceable things that I can't come up with on my own. When I'm debating during class, when making presentations, and even when I'm having a conversation with my

friends, I try to accept differences and use it as an opportunity to broaden my perspective, because I know from experience that by doing this, I will grow as a person. Just like what happened during the making of the mural, listening to others' opinions, accepting them, and working together led to gaining multiple new perspectives and ideas, which combined with my originality, and made me more attractive to others. My values right now are based on this lesson: accepting others. Now, I love this "new me" along with my new art. (682 words)