



**IMAG**



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# InSEA ART Education VISUAL Journal

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DECEMBER 2020

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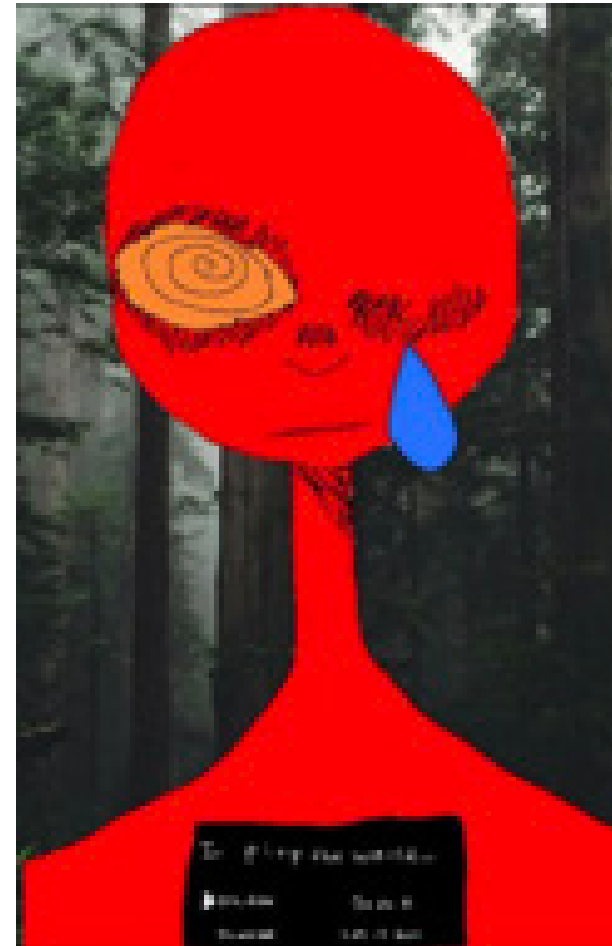
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# Distance Learning in Lebanon, Missouri

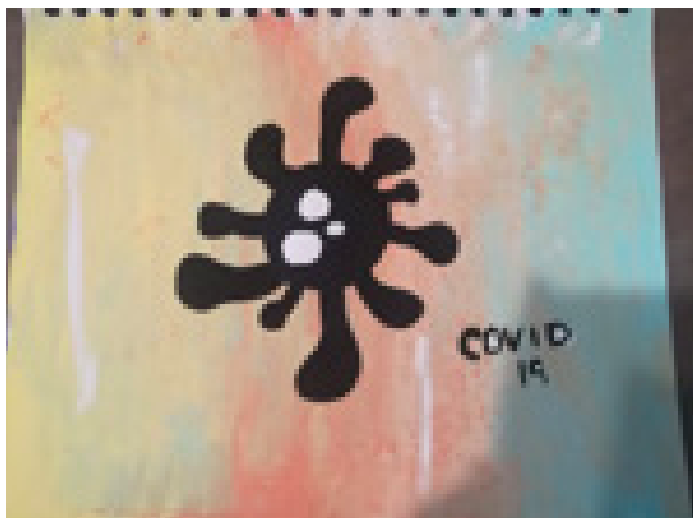
**Elizabeth Bauer-Barker**

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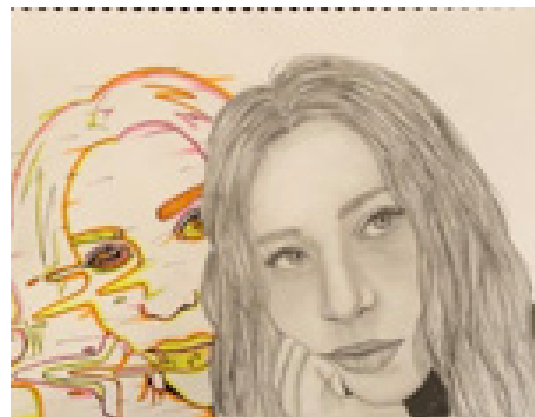
Digital Art by Alivia Stopper, LHS Freshman

On Thursday, March 12, 2020, I sat inside Lebanon High School's Boswell Auditorium with hundreds of others from our town of nearly 15,000 in Southwest Missouri. It was the spring band concert for the middle and high schools, the showcase of a successful program. The next day, as staff worked on curriculum during professional development, a national and state emergency was declared due to the spread of COVID-19. As planned, Visual Art staff began prepping art and displays for our upcoming All School Art Show. Then the National Art Education Association announced the cancellation of its spring conference in Minneapolis. Our superintendent emailed staff with instructions to prepare online lessons and contingencies "in case of a closure." That evening as my fourteen-year-old daughter applied makeup for the middle school play, her theatre teacher sent the cancellation notice. There would be no performance over the next two nights. Though a rescheduled date in April was announced, it would never come to pass. By Sunday evening, district staff was notified that Monday would be our last day until after Spring Break ended. This nearly two-week closure could be extended, but decisions would be made "week by week." The world had changed. It soon became clear that I had to change with it for the sake of my students.



Drawing by Kristin Elam, LHS Senior

Acting quickly, my student teacher Amy Rushing and I sent the Drawing and Art II students home with their partially completed Layered Portrait project rolled up with a rubber band. Ceramics students were each given a wrapped lump of clay and dictated instructions: keep clay bagged, wash tools and hands outside (not in household plumbing!), if possible-send a digital photo of the Morphed Artifact by April 3rd. We told them to be safe and to wash their hands. We fully expected to see them again soon. We didn't know it was the last seated day of the school year.



Layered Portrait by T. Ashlynn Fohn, LHS Senior



Drawing by Garrett Jones, LHS Junior

What followed were several days of teachers and staff working at the school. Custodians, paraprofessionals, and food service staff reorganized to continue providing meals to our large population of food-insecure families. Teachers worked to align expectations and assessments over the closure. We continued at first to prepare for the All School Art Show, expecting that in a few weeks we would be back in our routine. By the third workday, we learned of mass lay-offs at a local boat factory, the State of Missouri shutting down all schools and non-essential businesses, and some in our community even declaring school closed for the remainder of the school year. Hearing this, our mindsets began to shift. Our classrooms were to be packed up "for deep sanitation." I began to make lists and pack supplies. It was time to move out. My new "classroom" was at home. For how long? No one knew then, nor as of this writing, May 2020.



Drawing by Dalton Myler,  
LHS Senior



Delicate Arch Instant Coffee Painting by  
Elizabeth Bauer-Barker



"Alia at the Natural Tunnel, Bennett Spring State Park"  
Drawing by Elizabeth Bauer-Barker

Over the following weeks, a corner of my basement became the ceramics studio. An abandoned desk in a corner of my upstairs loft transformed into the "online classroom" I envisioned. Artwork, supplies, and school images were carefully arranged. My tech-savvy husband and son helped prepare my computer with programs and webcams. We live in a rural area about ten miles west of town near a state park. The internet service is very slow. As my husband and three children started also working and schooling from home, service became even slower. It underlined just one of the equity challenges presented by distance learning.



Digital Portrait by Alivia Stopper,  
LHS Freshman

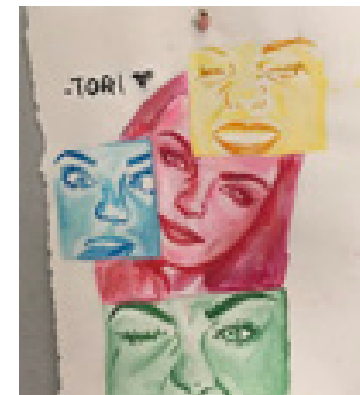
Spring Break ended but no one returned to school. Instead, the superintendent extended the closure until April 30th. We began daily Zoom meetings with our art students, but only a handful showed up at any given time. Mostly it served as a regularly offered connection and space for discussion. I created daily time-lapse videos of sketches or other demonstrations to post on Google Classroom and social media. I contemplated the irony of all the instances I had lamented "not having enough time" to work on artwork of my own. In simple imagery documenting of past travel adventures or current socially distanced hiking, I found solace in the meditative activity of art-making. For me, it's a pathway to stay in the moment during a time when planning for the future may not be practical or possible. We urged our students to use their projects for the same self-care outlet during a time of unprecedented worldwide uncertainty. Students were given a long list of flexible art options for the remainder of the semester. They were encouraged to turn in one activity per week. Sketchbook prompts, salt dough creations, virtual pottery created via smartphone application, instant coffee paintings, sidewalk chalk drawings, gardening arrangements, culinary art, photography and more were included. The medium and technique became less important than the regular



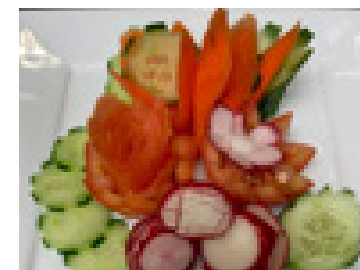
Chalk Art by Taylor Rodden, LHS  
Freshman



Radial Planter by Elizabeth Miller,  
LHS Freshman



Layered Portrait by Tori Welch,  
LHS Senior

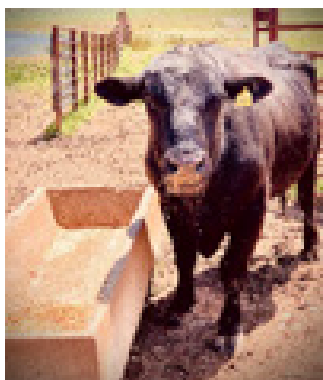


Vegetable Sculpture by Sarah  
Wilson, LHS Junior

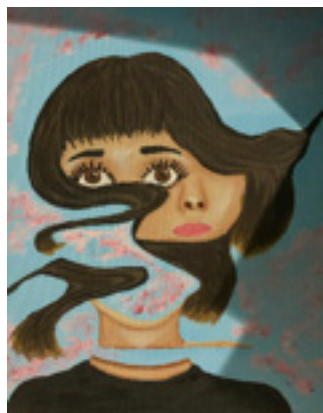




Drawing by Dalton Myler,  
LHS Senior



Digital Photograph by Haley  
McBride, LHS Junior

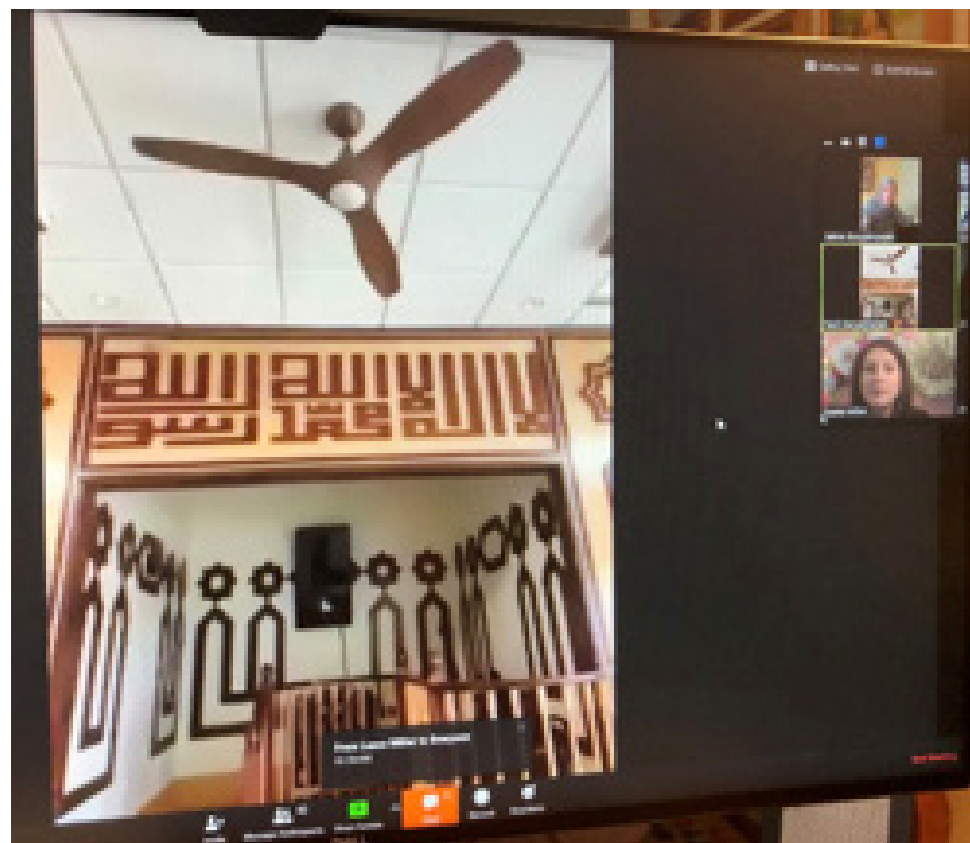


Layered Portrait by Kerstyn  
Waters, LHS Senior

act of creation. The primary focus on grading and assessment turned to focus on holistic well-being. When the school was finally closed for the remainder of the school year, with no hope of a return to our routines and extra-curricular activities, we were already prepared.

In the weeks that followed, we played a numbers game with 121 students in grades 9-12. How many have communicated through emails, phone calls, or Zoom meetings? How many have turned in projects? How many have adequate access to the Internet? How many need or want extra supplies? How many are now working full-time as essential workers to help support their families? How many are now expected to care and homeschool younger siblings? How many are now completely inactive? Hours of making phone calls became a daily routine. Our district leaders did their best to fill in gaps by sending Chromebooks and hotspots to rural homes. We enacted policies designed to keep students engaged in learning but minimized punitive assessment. Grades would not be lowered from what the students had for the third quarter without extensive documentation of failure to engage.

Engagement in art? How can we increase engagement? The weeks were filled with so much loss. Loss of human life. Loss of routine. Loss of plans and activities that previously made life fulfilling. How do we fill in those holes? We lost our spring fieldtrips to Kansas City and Crystal Bridges Museum of Art in Arkansas. They were replaced with virtual fieldtrips for current students, and even past students, who expressed interest through social media. Our most regular participant was a middle schooler in Florida sitting next to his mother, who had been in my class 24 years ago. On Zoom, the physical distances separating us became irrelevant.



Zoom Virtual Field-Trip to the Islamic Center of Greater Kansas City



Using our regular itinerary as a guide, we invited Zoom guests from the Islamic Society of Greater Kansas City. One of the goals of the high school curriculum is to prepare students to thrive in a global society. Richards and Willis (2020) state, "the divisions and divisiveness observable in society should concern all of us...[they] are exacerbated by isolation and intolerance for otherness...To be globally conscious is to know what is happening in the community, area, region and world" (p1). As religion and art are both manifestations of human culture, it is impossible to have a thorough discussion of one without the other to illuminate context. When we visit the art museum, we see many works of art on display in a sterile environment. Since the vast majority of historical artwork have a religious context, it only makes sense to allow students to view artwork and architecture within an active place of worship. Allowing a practitioner of faith to explain the tenets of their religion only further puts artwork in a more understandable context. On the Zoom fieldtrip, our students and those from the Islamic School were combined into one class. One of our guides walked through the empty mosque and explained the architectural features and importance of calligraphy. A few of their students showed our students how to write their names in Arabic calligraphy.



Morphed Artifact by Libbee Hays,  
LHS Freshman

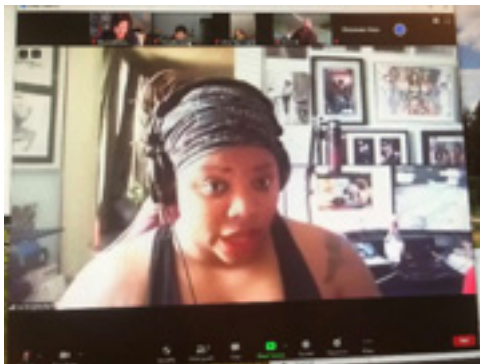
Having a background in the belief systems of others not only makes the artwork more understandable, but it also helps us work with others who are different from us. It is even more likely that as our students graduate and leave Lebanon, they will encounter those who follow a different religion. In the January 2020 issue of *Art Education*, Marie Huard's article "Don't Be Afraid of Religious Art: Thinking Through and Resources for Art Educators" explores how she teaches about the five major world religions in her Pennsylvanian elementary classroom. Students are shown religious art and then encouraged to make their secular creations based on a common theme such as family portraits or community activities. Her conclusion states, "Teaching about religious art is, in essence, teaching about multicultural art" (30). Huard further asserts that exploring religious traditions in art is challenging but very important.



Zoom Virtual Field-Trip,  
"Journey to FREEDOM"  
Textile by Karen E. Griffin,  
Kansas City, Missouri

The pandemic is underlining our human need for interdependence. This makes building bridges across cultural barriers and misunderstandings all the more critical. Over the remaining weeks of the 2020 semester, our students attended virtual fieldtrips with Lebanon High School alumni who had gone on to art school and art careers. They learned from their travels, unique life experiences with failure and success, and emphasis on the importance of resiliency. We also met with Karen E. Griffin, one

of our favorite guides currently furloughed from the American Jazz Museum in Kansas City. She is using her quarantine time to explore textile art as it's connected to her African American ancestry. Our final virtual fieldtrip took us to the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York City. Culinary artist and activist athlete Latoya Snell shared her experiences using social media to tell her story. She has thousands of followers around the world and has appeared on *Good Morning America* and *The Today Show* promoting marathon running as a sport for people of all shapes, sizes, and colors.



Zoom Virtual Field-Trip with Latoya Snell, Brooklyn, NYC

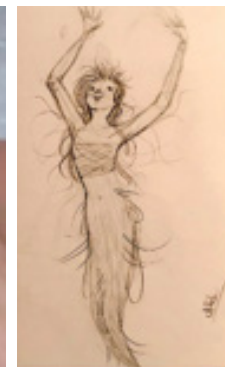
The school year concluded with more virtual experiences. We announced our annual art award winners through social media and emails. We put together a virtual art show on a Google Slideshow. The school district shared it on social media and it was forwarded by the Laclede County Record on Facebook. We experienced a surge of participation as parents and students from around the community viewed the diverse artwork. One colleague asked if we could continue virtual art shows in the future. Though we missed so many of our routine learning experiences in person, in other ways online learning encouraged more participation that will continue to be valued once we return to the school building. We don't know when or how the school will begin in the fall of 2020; we only know that change is here to stay. As it has through every tumultuous period in humanity's course of existence, art will help us process this change and transform our thinking.



Acrylic Painting by Katie Boven, LHS Sophomore



Morphed Artifact by TJay Jackson, LHS Senior



Drawing by Sydney Brame, LHS Freshman

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