



Art (Awarded by Blake Zachritz, Presented by Michael Flax): Holly S.

Pablo Picasso (I know. I'm opening with a quote. It's going to be long.) once said, "Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up."

That is my biggest concern as an art teacher. Everyone loves what we do, what we make, what we learn. Yet, by an older age, other interests sometimes filter in. That is where the challenge of "Artist of the Year" develops as I look back on ten years with many of these students.

It was around this class's fourth grade year that I knew I was going to have difficult decisions regarding this year's Artist of the Year Award, even though I had my eye set on this person in Kindergarten. In all the other years, the decisions have come easier, without so many sleepless nights.

This year, right now, is the year that I have always known that the decision would be challenging because I saw so many of the students in this class grow and 'remain artists'. I had met Pablo Picasso's challenge! Lucky me. The percentage was awesome, but it left me with quite a dilemma. Many in this class are very talented, several are exceptionally talented and creative, and I knew I would be dreading this day when I would have to choose just one.

I began to hope that one of these exceptional artists would move away, flunk, or at least skip a grade just to help me out. (Mr. Mota. I just ended a sentence with a preposition in a public forum.) Since no one moved away, flunked, or skipped a grade, alas, I was back at square one.

This class has several exceptional artists who show a deep love for art, both in class and out and by going over and above the completion of an assignment. That fact is what makes what is normally a happy day for me, a difficult one, because I must choose ONE for Artist of the Year. When I do, I want the others to know that I value them and I value their talent and that I have never seen, in all my many LONG years of teaching, such a talented group as many of you. I have spent much time talking about how difficult this decision was, not to take away from my selection, but to also acknowledge that I know there are other artists in our midst not only in this graduating class, but in my memory of this day.

The artist I have chosen as the 2020-2021 Artist of the Year is an exceptionally capable student in every way. She is an actor. She is a scholar. She is a musician. But most importantly, to me, she is an artist and has remained an artist "once she grew up". I give you, Holly S., Topeka Collegiate School Artist of the Year.