

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

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THE ART OF Creativity

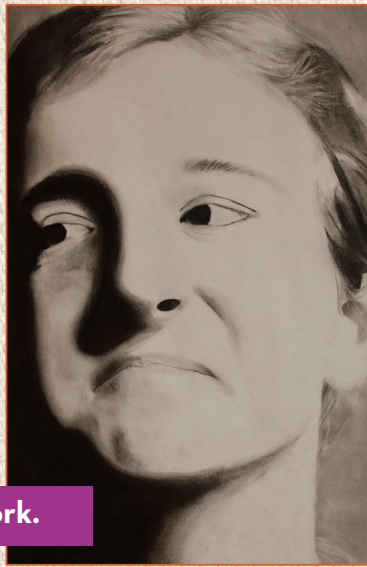
When thinking about gifted students, we often focus on the academic talents, but artistic talent is also included in traditional definitions of giftedness (such as that created by the Marland Report in 1972). For gifted young artist Kaylee Cooper of Vanguard College Preparatory School in Waco, art gives her a chance to explore the world from different perspectives.

Kaylee connected with art at a young age, in elementary school, when her teacher had the class work on still life paintings. As her classmates painted the same object from different angles, Kaylee found her love of unique perspectives: "I would always want to paint the item differently than everyone else. I would like to use a different color, or from a different perspective. My teacher would always correct me and tell me things like, 'Oh no, Kaylee, you need to draw or paint it this way or use this color.' But, I would always try to do something different than everyone else in the class. That is when I realized that I was kind of peculiar, but maybe in a good way!"

As her art has grown and developed, Kaylee notes that she still allows perspective to influence her: "It really inspires me to see how other people interpret ideas or things around them,

and I can take their ideas and methods and make something of my own from what they have created." Take her charcoal self-portrait (included with this article). The shadows and perspective of her face stand out as original, and Kaylee jokes in talking about this piece that it even shows her nervousness in working with a new medium and a larger surface in the expression on her face.

Kaylee, who has won several statewide awards for her art, is hesitant to talk about her accomplishments, but opens up quickly when you engage with her about different forms of art. Currently, she's experimenting more and more with digital art, which she says helps her practice a craft she'd eventually like to make into a career as an animator. "I think it is amazing how you can bring your drawings to life through animation. You can share it with other people and see how they would interpret. You can convey a lot of emotion . . . like through movement . . . through one nose twitch. I believe that you can show a lot about a person's character through their movement." Digging deeper, Kaylee shares a favorite character who demonstrates this, a triangle-shaped character named Bill Cipher from Disney's *Gravity Falls*. (Imagine



Kaylee and her artwork.

the triangle with the eye on the back of your dollar bill.) For Kaylee, this character represents the possibility of animation to develop character: “he looks really crazy, but the way the animators portray him makes it fun to watch. One would think a triangle would be very static, but he can grow in size, change colors, or even change shapes depending on how he feels. He is unpredictable. I love that.”

Her journey to discover her style of art was influenced by her teacher and mentor, Jonathan Syltie, who Kaylee notes “pushed her” to get out of her “comfort zone” with art, encouraging her to try new mediums and images. He also helps Kaylee remember the importance of learning from mistakes, and of doing art in a way that works best for her: “He offers directions and is ready to help, but allows me to do what I need to do. I think that great mentors sometimes have to let kids figure things out on their own. You support them and lead them to improve on their talent, but you can’t do it for them.”



Kaylee suggests that what’s unique about artists is that “They see the world in a different way than those who do not have a passion for art,” again sharing her own divergent thinking and individual perspective: “For example, most people see a tree, and they might like it or they might not. An artist sees every detail, every leaf on the tree, the variation of color of the bark on the tree, the textures . . . they see the parts instead of the whole tree.” With Kaylee’s eye for detail, original point of view, and passion for art, she’s a young artist to watch out for.

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