

## **Looking for Work with an Art Degree**

If you loved the arts in school and continued pursuing that in college, then graduated and tried to get a job, you may have heard a lot of negative things: "What did you hope to achieve with that?", "That's a real degree?", "How's that going for you?". Or maybe it was a standard question, but sounded condescending: "Do you have any real work experience?", "How would that help you here?" If that has affected you, or does affect you in the future, know that you're not alone.

I went to college for Theatre Performance and Creative Writing. Why and how I chose that path is its own story, but what I got out of it in the end is what we're here to talk about. It's important to have art in school, whether you pursue it later or not, and people should understand that it's not an unnecessary degree. **Art teaches you more than just how to act, sing or draw.** I can speak specifically from acting for the stage, but a lot of these things can roll over to any art form.

**It can teach punctuality, teamwork and self reliance.** I could never be late for a rehearsal, if I'm late, then everyone has to wait because in a staged show we all need to be together in order for it to work properly, or as a musician the band can't play without the lead guitarist. Why should they suffer because I decided to be late? I realize things come up, but some people really don't care if they're late, but everyone I was with were disciplined. I had a professor that drove into my head "fifteen minutes early is on time, on time is late" and it still stands out. It was only moving to a city like Austin where that rule got broken because I was, and still am, completely unaware how long it can actually take to get across town. But I still do not like to be late. What employer wouldn't be grateful to have a punctual team player in their company? In these cases, but especially in a drawing sort of artistry, you need to rely on yourself, or be self motivated in order to get things done. Having the ability and skill to work by yourself and with a team is really great.

**You can learn proper communication, public speaking and empathy.** On the stage, we all have to communicate on different levels. Actors become characters, we communicate not only with our words, but with our bodies. You can learn a lot about someone by how they say something, what they say or how they stand and move while talking. These details can help in a number of areas like law enforcement, psychology, social workers, sales, politics, etc...I've also known a lot of adults who won't speak publicly and that's the best way to have your voice heard for whatever reason. You never know when you'll have to speak in front of people and it's always best to have some experience. I think it's a wonderful skill to acquire. Being an empathetic person is something a lot more people need. When acting as a character you have to think and feel how this person would feel. We can listen and visualize as people tell their sorrows, and we can feel them deep down. We get a chance to take a walk in other people's shoes, and we come out the other end a lot wiser from the understanding of those around us. Having empathy doesn't make you weak, it makes you more human.

**It makes you dedicated, diligent and hard working.** Contrary to popular belief, it is not easy to give a performance on the stage, whether it be acting, singing or playing music. It takes a lot of energy because your energy feeds you, your team and the audience. It's almost a powerful feeling too to have the attention, the eyes, ears, thoughts and feelings of everyone around. It doesn't happen quickly either, it all takes time and dedication to work hard and diligent to put on a large performance. These performances also tell stories of their own and can change people watching in a number of ways, and it should be no surprise. When I got my degree I had to build sets, hang lights, design sets, design lights and sound, tear down sets, etc... It was a job, a family, and it was a huge part of my life, yet I still had actual jobs that paid, as well as attending classes. It's not easy and I wasn't lazy.

**So, if you apply for a job and you are patronized for having an art degree, just know that you are relevant**

**and you have great talents and skills to help progress you through life.** That person doesn't know what to look for when hiring. Even if you applied as a server or a host with no experience, don't let them downgrade your education because you haven't done it before.

If anything an art degree can be a life degree or a humanitarian degree. All art forms have their own strengths in life and society: painting and drawing can lead to architectural visionaries; musicians can relax, entertain and educate you; stage performers can be empathetic and understanding in order to work as educators, social workers or maybe even mental health doctors. These minor artistic areas can lead to bigger things. **Brush the nay-sayers off and know that you fit in someplace bigger and better.**