WHY ART IS IMPORTANT

"STEM makes the modern world we live in. From smartphones to spacecraft, medicine to the internet. The arts are what make living in this modern world worthwhile."

This was among some powerful responses on the underlined public forum site of the Khan Academy in answer to the question **Why is Art Important**?

Here's an experiment. To consider the impact of art, let's start by describing these acts - imagining, building, creating, inspiring. Let's add to those acts - abstract ideas of rights, values, and meaning. And let's call that combination of expression - ART.

David Norris describes so well in The Importance of Art in Daily Life how art is all around us, inescapable, and necessary. "*Everywhere you go art is evident. Parks often use sculptures to add interest and to inform people. Posters on walls give information and motivation. Music plays on the radio to keep your energy levels up. Without even realizing it we find ourselves immersed in the power of art most of the time!*"

Making and sharing art has a huge effect on our mood. Art can produce the possibility of joy and community, and it can also raise doubts and shed light. The act of creating an object, a work, can take us away from our continuous stresses and serves as a personal outlet. To artist and audience alike, it is also used as a way to move beyond the day-to-day routines of life as well.

When you create something that you share, and that something starts a conversation with yourself and others, it becomes part of the cultural experience that society engages in. Art can function for its "audience" to recognize a common way of dealing with life, death, fears, certainties, and doubt. That is both comforting and stimulating. Without overloading it with omnipotent purpose, Art is one of the ways we begin a necessary discussion of morals, values, ethics and responsibility. It makes space for empathy.

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Essex County Arts Council Board Member, 10/18
Photographs: courtesy of ECAC and Rebecca Kelly Ballet