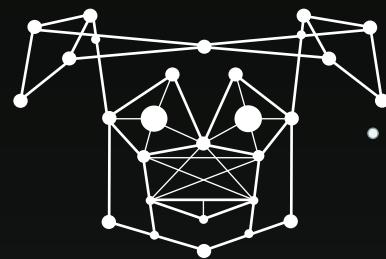


Art Among the Stars



Patch design by senior to travel to International Space Station

Molly Lubbers

Editor-in-Chief

10. 9. 8. 7. 6. 5. 4. 3. 2. 1. Blast-off! As the rocket shoots into the air, an astronaut on board looks down at her mission patch. The purple and gold glints in the light, and she reads "Fort Collins" before glancing back up.

Later this year, that scene may become reality. Senior Natasha Wisniewski designed a patch that will be sent to the International Space Station (ISS.) Her drawing was evaluated by alumna and astronaut Dorothy Metcalf-Lindenburger as part of an art contest in conjunction with the Go for Launch program. Next month, students will create space experiments that compete to be launched to the ISS, and Wisniewski's design will adorn the suits of the astronauts on that flight.

To Wisniewski, the idea her art will be going into space is meaningful. "I think it's really cool and my great-grandpa—he worked for NASA all throughout the '70s and '80s and he worked on the vessel that landed on the moon," Wisniewski said. "So, I called him up when I won, and it was really awesome to tell him my contribution to the space exploration and the love for that. It really meant a lot and I thought it was really a cool start to my art career."

Wisniewski didn't win the contest by luck; an AP art student and member of National Art Honor Society, she spends two to three hours on art every day. She started when she was just a child and found a passion for it right away.

"I was ambidextrous, so I would be painting with one hand and then drawing with the other one, and go back and forth," Wisniewski said. "I did so many things with art as a kid, ever since I was in kindergarten. I won a national art contest when I was in 4th grade, which was for saving the Chimpanzees, and I did murals for my elementary school in Arizona."

After winning a Silver Key Award from Scholastic in 8th grade, Wisniewski became even more invested.

"Just seeing how I could accomplish things and how I could actually get recognition, I thought, maybe this is something I can do," Wisniewski said.

Currently, she is spending most of her time on her AP Art Portfolio, which is scored by judges for college credit. One piece of that portfolio is a concentration, which requires multiple works that emphasize a topic or concern; Wisniewski has chosen international homelessness as her focus.

"For my portfolio, I've been getting a lot of my inspiration from different art from different regions," Wisniewski said. "My next piece is going to be Japanese block printing and I think I want to touch on international homelessness in certain capitals around the world, and also the art style surrounding that."

Wisniewski was partially motivated by personal experience.

"My dad is homeless; he's been homeless for about five years, on and off, and right now he's currently staying at the mission. So, I've been really involved in the homeless community, especially in Fort Collins, just hanging out with him," she explained. "My concentration is surrounding international homelessness. It's not necessarily to feel bad for them, but to kind of bring to light the actuality of homelessness, how they're not all drunks or druggies, and a lot of them have had unfortunate things happen to them, or mental illness. I just want to bring light to an issue that a lot of people ignore."

In general, Wisniewski likes her art to have a message, and often creates political art. That extends into what she hopes to do in the future, since she wants to use art to aid others.

"I want to go into social work, specifically kind of dig into art therapy and help people, kids, whoever explore themselves and their past through art," Wisniewski said. "Ideally, I'd really like to make an organization where I and a couple other people could go to a place where there's an environmental or political crisis and go there and have art therapy for the people who are experiencing that."

No matter what happens with her career, Wisniewski plans to incorporate art into her life.

"I don't really believe in God, but God gives you this talent, and so many people just don't use it," she said. "I was like, I have this talent that not a lot of people have, so I just want to use that and drain it out of my body as much as I can."

