

Each week we will pose an Artistic Challenge to our community that everyone can participate in from home. At the beginning of each week we will announce the theme and guidelines for the Artistic Challenge over our weekly update, Facebook and Instagram accounts. At the end of the week we will include selected responses in our social media posts and newsletters to the community. We ask that participants post their responses to the challenge on their social media accounts with the hashtag #EAartchallenge , if a student doesn't utilize Facebook or Instagram, but would still like to participate, they can email their responses to ehagan@mannycantor.org

This week's EA Artist Challenge: Fond Found Objects

As we are all spending more time at home than we are usually accustomed; I'm finding that I am becoming reacquainted with some meaningful objects from my past. It's interesting how some of the things that we collect absentmindedly become imbued with a greater significance without us even realizing it. The outside observer only appreciates these objects at the surface level, to them it's only a rock, a thimble, a ring, a toy, etc. But to the owner, these neglected pieces of curio, once revisited, have the ability to transport us through time and space. Placing us right back to where and when we found them, reminding us of who we were, where we have been and inspiring a greater appreciation for all the moments in between.

For our first community challenge, we ask that you scour your home for an object that you have collected along your journey that has a greater significance than what one would expect upon first viewing. Once you have found an appropriate item (it can be literally anything, as long as it's meaningful to you), snap a picture of it, and write a short blurb about what the object is and what it means to you. At the end of this week, we will include your responses into our weekly newsletter and social media accounts. Post your responses on your social-media accounts with the hashtag #EAartchallenge , if you don't use Facebook or Instagram, but would still like to participate, you can email your responses to ehagan@mannycantor.org

Evan's Response:



This is a piece of brain coral that I found on a beautiful black sand beach in St. Vincent & the Grenadines, on the island of St. Vincent.

I worked in the Grenadines for two summer's leading service trips for high school students, where our group would set up free arts-based community day camps on two different islands; St. Vincent and Bequia. At the time I picked up this piece mostly because of its interesting pattern. I've always been enamored with serpentine linework coiling and uncoiling on the surface of an object. So, this piece had immediate appeal to me. But in the intervening years between then and now, it represents more of a trophy.

To get this job as an international trip leader I had to become a life guard, and I am not too proud to confess that at the age of 25 when I was applying, I had not yet learned how to swim. But I was determined to be accepted into this position. And I was not about to let my, at the time, profound fear of water stop me.

It was the fall of 2010 I had just moved to NYC, and I had 6 months to learn how to swim if I was going to be eligible for the job. I enrolled in an evening swim class twice a week at the Asser Levy Recreational Center, near StuyTown. And almost every morning, before work, I would pick myself out of bed, go to the pool and practice what I had learned in class that week. It was hard, scary, and often pretty embarrassing. This lanky 6ft Midwestern transplant, fresh off the bus to NYC, flailing somewhat wildly in the public pool seemed to inspire some perverse amusement in

the staff on duty. Week after week I saw small improvements, and also noticed the look of concern and amusement slowly fade from the faces of the on duty life guards. Time passed and my skills improved, I was accepted into the position and completed life guard training (probably the most difficult and frightening experience of my life. But that experience is a story in and of itself). The beaches of St. Vincent are littered with pieces of coral almost identical to this one. But this piece is mine, I earned every cubic centimeter of it with a profound amount of hard work. I will carry this piece of coral with me to every home I live in, as a reminder that I can persevere through anything if I keep focused, remain patient & positive, and refuse to quit.