

Adventures in Cardboard (AiC) is an outdoor theatrical summer camp where all things, from body armor to swords to castles, are made from cardboard, tape, and bamboo. I have attended and worked for AiC, a community of artistic, welcoming, and talented people, for most of my life. Through it I have learned about my love for design and its challenges, what kind of person I want to become, and the joy I find in collaboration. I have amassed a large collection of props but there are three that exemplify who I have become: the Saw Blade, Fletcher's Sword, and the Scrap Hat.

At nearly six feet long, the Saw Blade resembles a giant cleaver with hooked saw teeth. What I love about the Saw Blade is the process I went through to make it. Designing and creating props is one of my favorite things about camp. It is difficult to make large saw teeth that don't break. I prototyped ways to keep a thin, sharp appearance while maintaining strength. That moment of realization when I found my working technique was amazing. From that point on I was a blur of excitement, frantically creating and pouring everything I had into the Saw Blade. The challenge of making something new was electrifying. From my initial idea to realizing the final product, I learned about iterative design and how much I enjoy challenges.

Fletcher's Sword is unique in my collection, not because of its appearance but because of who made it. Fletcher, a counselor at AiC for most of my time there, embodies my idea of a good person: kind, helpful, supportive, accepting, and friendly. As a camper at AiC, I knew they would help me realize any idea. As a mentor, they were always positive, even when giving critical feedback. On their last day, Fletcher gifted me their sword as though passing on their legacy of passion, inspiration, and kindness. I realized I can be like Fletcher. I can inspire others the way Fletcher inspired me.

The Scrap Hat represents joy. One rainy day, I made a little hat from cardboard scraps lying around. It covered just past my shoulders. It kept me dry for a while, but I needed to keep my backpack dry, so I added more scraps around the brim. During my lunch, I added more scraps and eventually I had a comically large hat. My campers crowded around me like chicks sheltering under a mother hen's wings. They enjoyed the Scrap Hat more than I, laughing about its absurd dimensions and silliness. I kept adding to the Scrap Hat little by little for 10 weeks until it became so large I could barely bring it to camp. At the end of summer, I decided to give it away. I gave it to a camper who had witnessed the Scrap Hat's journey. They were thrilled. They ran to their parent, hat flapping. I saw their parent dreading trying to transport the Scrap Hat. The juxtaposition between dread on the parent's face and joy on the child's is my favorite memory of the Scrap Hat. It was exactly what I had hoped for. The absurdity of the Scrap Hat as well as the memories it created make it one of my favorite pieces. It taught me how bringing wildly different ideas and people together can result in positive chaos that brings joy to those around it.

The Saw Blade, Fletcher's Sword, and the Scrap Hat each represent growth and development gained through AiC: the draw of a challenge and the development that comes with it, being supportive of and inspiring others, and finding joy in everything. These ideals greatly influence

my decisions and outlook. I rely on them to push me toward the future to learn and do more than I ever thought possible.

Quick Write:

Adventures in Cardboard is an incredible community of artistic, welcoming, and talented people. I have been a part of this community for most of my life and it has shaped many aspects of me. It has made me a better communicator, a more creative and curious person, and more confident in myself and my ideas, and has given me an insight into the kind of person I strive to become.

The people at AiC are inspirational. I have met many people, both children and adults, that have incredible individuality and they are proud of it. They inspired me to be more myself and to enjoy the things that I enjoy and to help others do the same. It helped me learn that one of my favorite things to do is help others realize their ideas and dreams. I love helping to foster passion and enjoyment in anything someone is interested in. I have also learned from people at AiC that it is infinitely more fun to build off of others' ideas than to try and tear them down or start over. Working with others can bring you closer to the people you are working with and make your task far easier.

AiC is full of passionate people. Everyone has some interest that is integral to them, one that they never stop learning about and love sharing. This creates an environment where if you have a question about nearly any topic someone will be able to answer it in incredible detail. It enables learning in a way that I have never found anywhere else. The constant flow of learning about such a wide range of subjects is perfect for someone who always wants to know more, like me. The excitement that comes with people talking about their interests is also perfect as anything someone around me is excited about I also get excited about.

Brainstorm:

Fletcher's Sword

Community

Fletcher as a role model

Fletcher's Sword is a simple one, just a 32 inch blade and one foot handle with a simple stick crossguard. Someone seeing it for the first time may find it sticks out in my collection in three ways, its simplicity, it is paper mache, and I didn't make it. The reason I keep Fletcher's Sword has nothing to do with its appearance but with who made it and what they represent. Fletcher was a counselor at camp for the majority of my time there. To me they embodied the ideal counselor, outgoing, friendly, creative, supportive, accepting, and excited. Their sword is a reminder of them and the community as a whole. It represents both where I have been and where I want to go.

Saw Blade

Challenge

Fun

The Saw Blade is a three and a half foot curved serrated blade attached to a two foot handle and a thick cylindrical pommel with a ring and flowing strips of black rubber at the base. It uses a wooden core with up to five layers of cardboard at its thickest point. The Saw Blade is one of my favorite swords I have made in part because it looks so good but also because it was extremely difficult to make. Before making it I had never seen anything like it so I was forced to create all the techniques I used. It was an incredible challenge that had me so excited I ended up working almost the entire day for two days to finish it.

Hat?

Scraps?

Challenge

Passion

Fun

Growth

This past summer decided to make a hat. It started of necessity as it was pouring rain and I hoped to not get soaked however as weeks went by I added more and more around the brim of the hat. Eventually, I decided that I wanted a hat that I could not touch the edge of so I kept adding and adding. I quickly ran into the issue of structural integrity, the hat was folding under its weight. I added crossbracing supports to the top to hold it up which worked well but made the brim slightly upturned creating yet another issue, lift. Anytime there was even a slight breeze the hat would lift off of my head. I tried adding a chin strap but that only made the hat pull my head with the wind, I tried adding straps to go under my arms but they just stretched to let the hat move. Eventually, I decided to just hold the arm straps when the hat was pulling away.

Clauntlets?