

So this lecture hit me a bit closer to home than I honestly thought it would. To start off, I wanted to talk about his quote “experience is what you get when you didn’t get what you wanted”. I’ve had this happen to me on too many occasions to really count, but one really stuck out to me in recent memory, which was during a miniature painting competition that was held here locally a few years back.

I spent weeks painting one model that was at the time the culmination of everything I had learned up to that point. Near the end though, I started to cut corners due to procrastination, and an ever shortening deadline. When I went to the contest, I was placed into the “Masters” category, which was a huge upgrade from the year prior, and then had to play the waiting game. Later that afternoon we were told the results, and I was disappointed that I took last in the category.

This did not sit well with me for quite a long time. The contest itself had put up several brick walls that I had no real way of getting around to get the outcome that I desired (I.E: not having more narrowed categories to not have a large canvas miniature against a very very small canvas miniature), along with not being able to choose what category I wanted to get into over all. At the time, all I saw was that I didn’t win, I was cheated by an unfair system, and wasn’t recognized for what I had done.

It wasn’t until later that I realized how important it was that I had lost. In losing, I went out and was able to talk to the judges, and figure out what I could do better, along with what I had excelled at. Not only this, I was able to talk with the other competitors, seeing how they were able to achieve certain techniques that I wasn’t able to yet. I even had a chance to talk to the head judge, and ask why I had been moved to the Master’s category, when I had only been painting seriously for a little over a year. He had mentioned how not only would it not have been fair for the others below me to put me in a lower category, it would have done more damage to my own painting journey just getting an easy win.

By far the biggest thing that hit me, was in trying to break down this wall, I unintentionally broke down a different one. I had come to realize my own faults, take inventory, and know moving forward, what it would take. Later that year, I was able to enter into another international event that started at the local level and won all the categories basically without contest. Without the experience I had at the previous contest, there would have been no way I would have been able to improve myself.

Along with this, I wanted to talk about his topic on how mentors affect how your willingness to pursue your aspirations. I was listening to this while doing my delivery route, and had to pull over as I had a serious emotional moment. I’ve had to fight for everything I have, with some support from my family and mentors, but not nearly as much as most people have had around me. I had actually had a mentor I looked up to quite fondly once tell me that my dreams were akin to a child wanting to be a rockstar, and nothing more than a ridiculous fantasy.

This went as far as when I went to make the career/life change to leave my comfortable job at almost thirty, downgrade to a part time job, and to go to school full-time, I was met with nothing but backlash and resentment from just about everyone around me. I was having what felt like weekly anxiety attacks over being able to just talk about this change just with my family, some I won’t even inform, due to the fact I don’t want the negativity. Looking back on it, if I had the support to chase after my dreams, I may have made this jump a long time ago.