

It's not too late to do what you love

On March 6, I attended “Kentucky Crafted: The Market” at the Kentucky Expo Center. The juried show, produced by the Kentucky Arts Council, brings nearly 400 artisans, musicians, filmmakers, specialty food producers, authors and publishers together under one roof and displays their craft to the public.

As I toured the show, it occurred to me that I was surrounded by hundreds of people that most of the world envies. They are people who have followed their passion, who have excelled in their craft, who have been recognized by other artists and who make money from what they love to do.

I have no idea if woodwork, photography, jewelry, ceramics, folk music, gourmet cakes or any of the other disciplines featured

in the show is the sole source of income for any of the exhibitors — and The Market wasn't the place to ask such a question — but the show and the quality of the work reminded me that it could be.

Attracted by the original design of fine jewelry displayed in a booth I was passing, I entered the booth of PhbeaD. I talked briefly with Dr.

Melissa Senetar, the owner, to find out what her tagline,

“Where science meets art,” means.

She explained that the unique designs in her resin jewelry are real insect wings that she irons and then sets into sterling silver. She and her family find dead bugs as they walk outside. Also, she works with insect farmers in other countries and international importers to get the wings of a monarch butterfly from Madagascar into a beautiful, silver bracelet she can sell in Kentucky.

Just before I stepped aside so that she could complete a sale to an enthusiastic patron in the increasingly busy booth, Senetar told me she was trained as a scientist; turns out, she has a Ph.D in biochemistry.

As I left Senetar's booth, two things I had seen several months earlier returned to my mind: an article on CNN.com about DNA testing being used on children in China to identify their genetic gifts and set them on the appropriate career path early, and a

quote by English novelist George Eliot.

In the article, some parents and scientists were excited about an opportunity to know which natural gifts and talents their children should focus on while others were worried that parents would pressure children who should be playing and having fun.

The pressure could be overwhelming, I thought, but early focus has its perks, too. We play when we're young, but experts in the find-your-passion-and-be-happy-books I've read always suggest going back to the play we loved as a kid in order to find our true passion in life.

Imagine how much happier we might be as adults if we were allowed to apply strict attention and focus as children to what we enjoyed, if we developed our craft early, got extremely good at something we loved to do and didn't spend years bouncing between unsatisfying jobs?

Elliott might say it doesn't matter.

The quote, “It's never too late to be who you might have been,” is attributed to him. I don't know the context in which he said it, but in my life, it means that while I may not be able to turn what I loved to do and dreamed of doing as a child into my sole source of income, opportunities to do what I enjoy will continue to manifest themselves in different ways.

Since I probably couldn't locate the paintbrushes in my mother's house even if I tried, I can't call myself a visual artist anymore. But as a writer and occasional actor, I can still very much say that an artist is who I am.

And while I can't redo my life to make all the “right” moves for my gifts, I can focus on them now and believe that it's never too late. ♣

Mariam Williams is a Louisville native who writes about the random thoughts that hold her attention for two minutes or more.



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