

International Artwork Collaboration

Story around it

In the age of soundbites, two second attention spans and cancel culture... discovering anything of substance in social media is rare. Nearly everyone posts content... hardly anyone comments or replies.

As an autistic adult who finds socializing difficult, even excruciating... social media stands ready as an opportunity to connect with people like me without the anxiety of eye to eye contact and awkward silence.

In an attempt to cut through the fast paced, quick scrolling nature of Instagram activity... I stepped out of my comfort zone. Eight years ago I created my account and decided to find out if there was another level... somewhere deeper down where people do comment, where they seek to consume and discuss content other than their own.

Continuing....

I didn't happen all at once... there wasn't all of a sudden a huge rush of people greeting me and following me. I started out with basic kindness. If I saw someone was having a bad day... I took the time to read their post... you know, the words below the pictures and memes?

And then I'd comment. I'd say something supportive and always genuine.

I'd look for photos I liked on smaller accounts and I'd make a real effort to start a discussion on where it was taken or how much I liked the contrast or texture.

Slowly but surely I'd get private messages from truly interesting people. And much to my delight... I made friends.

More and more I began to have heart to heart talks with the people I met like this. Ideas and art, joys and loss... the deeper parts of life were shared along with the lighter moments.

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I don't remember when exactly I decided that there is merit to social media on a level more meaningful than what appears on the surface. But, I did, it's there...

Now, of course my day to day life is not always perfect. Just like anyone else there are ups and downs. My downs are winning right now... my health is not good and I'm currently looking for somewhere to live. With a small disability check and lots of medical bills... that has proven to be a challenge.

Those who have gotten to know me have heard me say many times... "I'm still smiling."

And my contacts... my good friends I've made on Instagram are a big reason I still have my smile.

One of these friends is an artist from Portugal. We bonded over our autism... our love of art and photography. Our desire to create and learn has spawned ideas, tears and laughter.

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Our creative relationship was born organically. It grew from the simple kindness and communication I described in my Instagram beginnings. And for autistic adults who both find socializing difficult and often excruciating... being able to collaborate on ideas and artwork is more than cathartic. What will we create? Who knows... its just another beginning, but it is exciting and the sky is the limit.

End