"This artifact represents my thinking on tinkering because none of us could have predicted the outcome before and even during the building process."
ArtsECO Fellows 2020-2021  William Plautz

Briefly explain what the artifact is and where it came from.

My artifact is a photo of a cardboard house I made with the 5-year-old daughter and 9-year-old son I babysit. On day one of working with them, the first thing the kids suggested was to make a fort together. We searched their house for materials and came back with a variety of blankets and pipe cleaners. Then, we got to work. Most of the fort construction was done by me with some direction from the older brother. This was okay, but I wanted the kids to feel ownership over their own creation. The fort had to come down daily for bedtime, so making it upstairs soon became more of a task than any of us expected. Then, we started making a gigantic blanket fort in the basement. That had to come down too, though, when the family got a new furnace. I thought to myself, "What could we use to build a fort that can keep both kids involved while giving them creative ownership of the structure?" I suggested using cardboard boxes and they loved the idea. With the creative minds of these two children, we successfully tinkered a box house big enough to fit all three of us.

Explain how the artifact represents your current thinking on tinkering.

This artifact represents my thinking on tinkering because none of us could have predicted the outcome before and even during the building process. We tinkered with the materials to “make up” the structure as we went along. The first step, suggested by the brother, was to cut our gathered boxes into flat cardboard. This part was done by us two while the younger sister taped chunks of packaging foam to the soon-to-be walls and floors for decoration. Then, we laid out pieces for the base and starting building up the walls with cardboard. At some point, the brother suggested adding a thin wooden board that was painted with chalkboard paint along the wall of the house. “Why not?”, I thought, so we made it work. There were many moments of joy, frustration, and curiosity. With the final addition of the roof, our box fort was complete — or so I thought. The next week, I came back happy to find that the kids and their moms had added a blanket for a door and decorated the inside of the fort with markers. Their drawings included a big Christmas tree and portraits of the daughter’s favorite stuffed animals. This experience in constructing on-the-go as a team gave us an opportunity to practice meaningful life skills together such as collaboration and problem-solving.

Link to artifact:

drive.google.com/open?id=1IwsQfAztijQqDcE56Q5M36SgjX-rPl9d