

Mathilda 0:00

So I'm Matilda. I'm doing Fine Art Painting, third year at Wimbledon. I am from Plymouth, you know, not that arty a place. But I've always been very creative and Wimbledon just grabbed me completely out of all the colleges I saw. For me, it's all about the way they present themselves. So I came to the open day and they, they showed around the whole college and made you feel so at home. And then when I went for the interview, it was like, they just wanted me to talk. And for me, that's really easy. And I yeah, I just felt very at home. The tutors really seem to care, they are very kind, they really want to hear about your work, but they also want to just hear about you and want you to be comfortable and happy. There's an intimidating thing at other colleges where they're trying to force you to be a certain style, you know, they have like a house style and a certain way of working. But with Wimbledon, they kind of wanted me to work in the way that was best for me. And they kind of presented it that way, like will adjust for each student and each student's problems and strengths. And that's kind of like what it's been home. You know, your parents love you no matter what. And they want you to do the best that you can do with what you're good at. So it just felt like that.

Academic Support 1:16

Yeah. And how did you prepare?

Mathilda 1:20

I mean, I prepared like financially a little bit, I've a little bit of savings. I have like family helping me out, which I'm very lucky about. And mentally, I don't know how you can prepare, I think it's making sure you've got all your stuff ready, everything you need. You have a routine ready of how you're going to like spend each day because, you know, they encourage you to come in September - the courses starts in October, you have like a whole month. Which is why I'd encourage people to go to halls, because that's such an important month for socialising. It was really good for me. It's strange, I don't know how I prepared mentally. I just know I got all the stuff I needed - all the kettles and shower mats and stuff. Yeah.

Mathilda 2:03

What I would say it's someone thinking about coming here is firstly, don't expect too much of yourself. It's a very big city, it's very overwhelming. And a lot of people come wanting to go to all the galleries - do all this stuff. One, you won't have enough money to do that all at once. But also, I think it's really good to just have like a day to day routine and keep your world very small at the beginning, really focus on just hanging out with your hall mates. And then slowly branch out, it can be a bit much if you're trying to do everything. And you feel... I think in London, you feel a bit guilty if you're not doing stuff all the time. And I think it's letting go of that a bit, at first.

Mathilda 2:39

I didn't think I'd find it that overwhelming. I thought I'd find it fine. But I think for me, I need to live in a quieter place. Somewhere, yeah, where I am right next to college, I'm not having to travel too much, though, I think it was good for me to live in halls, it was like an hour away, which was quite annoying. But it was important. But I'd say in second year, third year, live closer to college, just because it can be quite overwhelming having to travel and do the work. And also, you know, wanting to fit a job in there. I think it's knowing what you can handle and not trying to compare

yourself to others. Because I think college is the biggest... like it shows the most how different people are and how differently people work. And you can really get bogged down in, oh god, I'm not working the same way as someone else, like I work better in the evening, or I can't handle as many hours at work or I don't want to go to all the lectures and they do. You know, it's like all these things you can pay yourself. And I think the main thing is to just do what you're comfortable with and not feel the peer pressure. Yeah.

Mathilda 3:42

I'd say compared to school, it's very similar in the sense that it's very practice based. And that's what I loved about school. That's what I love about this college in particular, they really focus on what you're actually creating and what you're interested in rather than your technical abilities, which is so subjective anyway, and your writing abilities, which is something I struggle with, and at school and at college, they both helped with that sort of stuff. I think the biggest shock, I think anyone finds a college is the routine is gone. Luckily, we have the studios, we can be in all day and see people but I imagine a course where you don't have a studio, you have a lot of free time, or a lot of time that you should be organising yourself. And it's a lot to do that yourself. So um, I think the first is working that out ... working out how you're going to manage your time. And it's a lot, I like a forced routine. I like being told when I should be working. So I'll just put it off. But I've learned now how to manage it. Yeah, it just takes time.

Academic Support 4:44

Let's talk about the different elements that make up studying art and developing as an artist?

Mathilda 4:52

The main thing is, they really want you to be painting every day, they're like, you really need to just be loving what you're doing. And that's great for me because I love to paint, that is a little bit of a divide I found is that I go in and people don't paint too much. And they do a lot of research. There's so many different ways of working, they actually mark your grade at the end holistically. So if you've got less research, but you've got your paintings very developed and self explanatory on the research, they will mark it down, they work out what your practice is to you. So like the holistic assessment, it's very reassuring, it's really reassuring, you know that they're not going to mark you the exact same way. Because we all work in such different ways. They don't have favourites. And they're very good about that. There's a lot of lectures, they really try and encourage us to go and they don't just get painters in they get other fine artists. And with tutorials as well, I think you just have to go for everyone you can - I think we have two a term. And then we also have a group one as well, which I really like that. And sometimes it can be really stressful. I think people expect it all to flow easy. And so when it gets hard, you may blame the tutors. But really, it's just such a... art is such a stressful process. You know, you go through like amazing flows states where you're just everything you paint, you just know what you're doing. And you really know what you're saying with your work. And then there's other states where you just can't pay anything, and you want to choose to fix it. And they're like, you just have to go through this awful stage by yourself. But they're there to support you through it. So they don't fix it because no one can, but

they really encourage you to be like you need to treasure this time where you're procrastinating.

Mathilda 6:28

There's moments, I think, in college, where you're just constantly and particularly in modern day society, you're constantly trying to entertain yourself, you know, like on your phone, watching TV, it's really good to just go for a walk, and just not do anything, you know, really try and just clear your mind. For me, I love to paint just therapeutically. So I just start painting and I don't know what I'm going to paint. But I just constantly keep that going. And like, I eventually get to something usually in the worst moments, and you literally just don't care what you're going to paint - it actually comes out the best because you're just doing what you want and you're not like surrounded by what you should be doing or you haven't developed this certain style and you feel like you have to stick to this. You're actually just playing and I think play is so important. In the second year, I found it really, I had a really hard time, I didn't leave the house much because she's very supportive, and I just painted all day. And all night a lot. It just really kind of helps with the course and helps with you, as well, as a person to function better.

Academic Support 7:28

Could you talk more about how you get through those bad times at times when things are really hard?

Mathilda 7:34

I mean, honestly, like the college was really supportive. I don't want to like insult doctors, but there's a mental health issue in like our society, and I, particularly, I have autism, they've told me I have ADHD ... maybe. One of the best things about the college's is that they encourage you all to go for this test where they see if you have dyslexia or dyspraxia or ADHD. They can't do autism, that too big of one, but... and they give you an academic diagnosis of ADHD. So that alone is so amazing. To get that for free, it's very lucky. At the end of the day, I think it's a struggle, what everyone's going through when they go to college in their 20s, I don't think it's just specifically me being neurodiverse. I think anyone who's just in their 20s is struggling and the college really, they just want you to just like, just please keep painting, or just please keep doing what you're enjoying. They want you to come in because it does help coming in and socialising. But I think the main thing is just keep creative, because it's so rewarding. They just really value that.

Mathilda 8:40

I think everyone expects to come to college, and you're going to be constantly working. And it's like a really busy atmosphere. And like you have so much to do, and you do have a lot to do. But it's not so immediate. It's not like a school where you know, like tomorrow, this is you the next day this is due. Having your parents home, they're the ones that get you out the house in the morning, you know, they're the ones that they go out and they're like, 'come on', they'll just sort of push out the door a bit, you don't have that as much, you really are responsible for yourself. And I think people shouldn't be too hard on themselves at the beginning, when they find that difficult. I was too hard on myself for too long about not being able to handle everything all at once. Because it's so much change that's happening. And I think you really need to self reflect and be like, if you're what's best for me, just take your

time alone. And if you spend a few days not going to college and doing nothing at home, do not feel guilty about that. Because that will lead you to have more energy in the future to do something, you know ... obviously don't do it for months on end, then that's depression. But like, everyone needs a break, you can't think properly, because so much is going on. And you just need your mind to rest again, and reboot. And then usually good stuff comes from that. That's usually the best times come after that.

Academic Support 9:56

What's it like working with people from so many different nationalities and cultures and environments?

Mathilda 10:03

I think there's it's very welcoming this college, I haven't experienced any sort of racism or prejudice, I haven't seen it, but then I'm a white British woman. So I don't have those problems as well and I'm aware of that. But I think it's really good to be in a multicultural atmosphere. Because you learn so much, you know, I come from Plymouth, which is predominantly white. I come from like a middle class background but my school was very working class. Coming here, you know, London is ... just there is no certain culture, it's just so much going on so many different religions and faiths. And it's just... an amazing experience. You know, I started off in Tooting, which feels very like Middle Eastern culture. And then I was in Brixton which is completely different. It's very Afro Caribbean. It's such a multicultural city, yeah.

Academic Support 10:57

You said that you were dyslexic?

Mathilda 11:00

No, it's I've autism and Academic diagnosis of ADHD, they can't get the form because it's like medical.

Academic Support 11:06

So for you writing is...

Mathilda 11:10

I mean, it's, it's very interesting. My dad's an English teacher. And both of my sisters did English degrees. It's more, I have the ability to read and write. But focus just goes out the window. It feels anxious reading, I can't relax into it. And I've talked to my tutors about that, and like, you know, you don't have to read a whole book, you read the parts that interests you. And you listen to podcasts, and you go to events, you know. There are people that read books and books and books that I know. And for me, I can't do that. So I make lots of notes. You know, I do the whole thing where I read and then I find a quote, and I write down the quote. And that's sort of how I work I just take bits out.

Academic Support 11:52

And you've done your dissertation yet?

Mathilda 11:54

I've done my dissertation and I got... I just got at 2:1, like this my biggest achievement. I don't know how how I did that. I haven't cried yet. But I feel like I'm

gonna cry eventually about it, because it was like, and the main thing they tell you is to take little bit every day, and I really tried to stick with that, it doesn't always work. I was very lucky because of the ADHD diagnosis, I got extra software. So I got a headset that you speak into and the words come up. So, about a third of my essay I spoke, and then you go back and edit a bit because sometimes words come out a bit different than what you've said. So if you feel insecure about your... disability sounds negative, but it is technically sort of... if you feel insecure about it, it's just like, it's not worth it. You just get all the help you can. They're really happy to help you out.

Academic Support 12:45

And how's your attitude writing changed? And can you see the value of it in terms of development in your own work?

Mathilda 12:53

There were moments when I was writing the essay, and I just was like, I'm just enjoying this so much. I'm learning so much about this person. You don't.... maybe it's from a perspective of a woman. But I feel like learning about these female artists or learning and just about any artists who relates to you, in some sort of way, in any sort of struggle you've had. It's amazing to write about them and learn about them and just feel so connected to them. You know, for me, it's more about who they are as a person then necessarily their work, like writing about William Blake, this man who lived like hundreds of years ago and feeling connected. And being aware of that connexion through reading and writing about it. Yeah, it was quite emotional. Yeah. So I really value it now. I still struggle at all my friends are writing their research at the moment, and I haven't gotten around to it. But I know I will now and I'm quite comfortable with what I can achieve. I'm "okay, I'm not going to get first. And I'm not always going to get B's either but I'm so proud of myself for the grade I'm gonna get". Yeah.

Academic Support 13:55

Can we talk a bit about assessment and your view on assessment? Yeah.

Mathilda 14:00

A few months ago, we had our interim show. So we put up our work and we talked about it, and you got like the breakdown grades, we didn't get final grade and it didn't go toward your end grade. It was kind of, like, a practice for the degree show. And I'd say that was arguably the most important tutorial experiences I had. I really struggle with presentation throughout my course, I work a lot on paper. And I just didn't know how to show it. I never felt like my piece would be just one piece on a wall. And I thought, I need to just really play around with presentation. I kept saying I feel like I'm conducting an orchestra. It was like, I just realised like there's the making of my work and then there's presenting, for me are both art forms. It was like such an important experience for me. I'm excited to put up the work before I was dreading it and I just didn't know what I was doing, and I'm excited.

Academic Support 14:51

I'm interested to know what got you to come to do this podcast? What was it that motivated you?

Mathilda 15:01

Lately, I've really wanted to... god, it sounds so corny... I was like ... I liked with the idea of helping people out. But like just someone who's maybe more diverse had their own sort of certain experience just having a chat. If I'd heard that a few years ago, it would have made me feel so much better. I don't see much about autism, ADHD, and I get annoyed about it. And I'm like, well, that's my fault. I should be saying something... there's room for everyone to talk about their prejudices, the prejudices that are put onto them. Because really, our differences aren't an issue. It's the shame that people attached to it. So I don't think there's anything wrong with me. It's more how people have treated me or how I've seen myself presented, people like me presented. So really I wish I'd spoken up sooner, or created some sort of like, club for people. But it's a hard thing to do, particularly if you're socially anxious. Oh well....

Academic Support 15:59

Wel I'm so glad you came today because I think you have made a important contribution and your voice is really important to hear. Yeah, thank you so much

Mathilda 16:11

Brilliant, thank you.