

# Creating Typewriter Art

By Kelye Kneeland

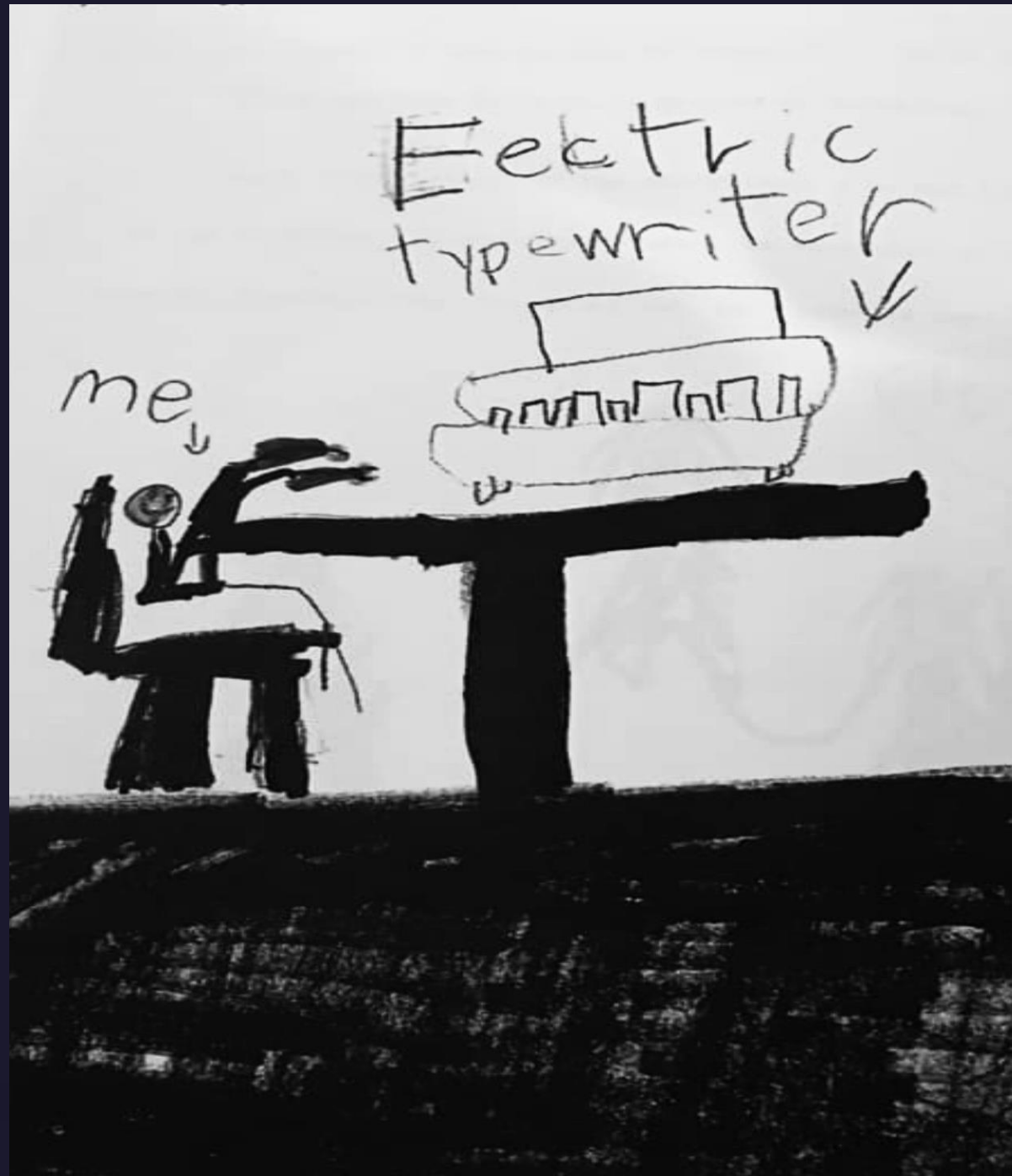


I created  
portraits using  
dots; also  
known as  
pointillism,  
for many years  
before  
discovering how  
to do  
typewriter art.

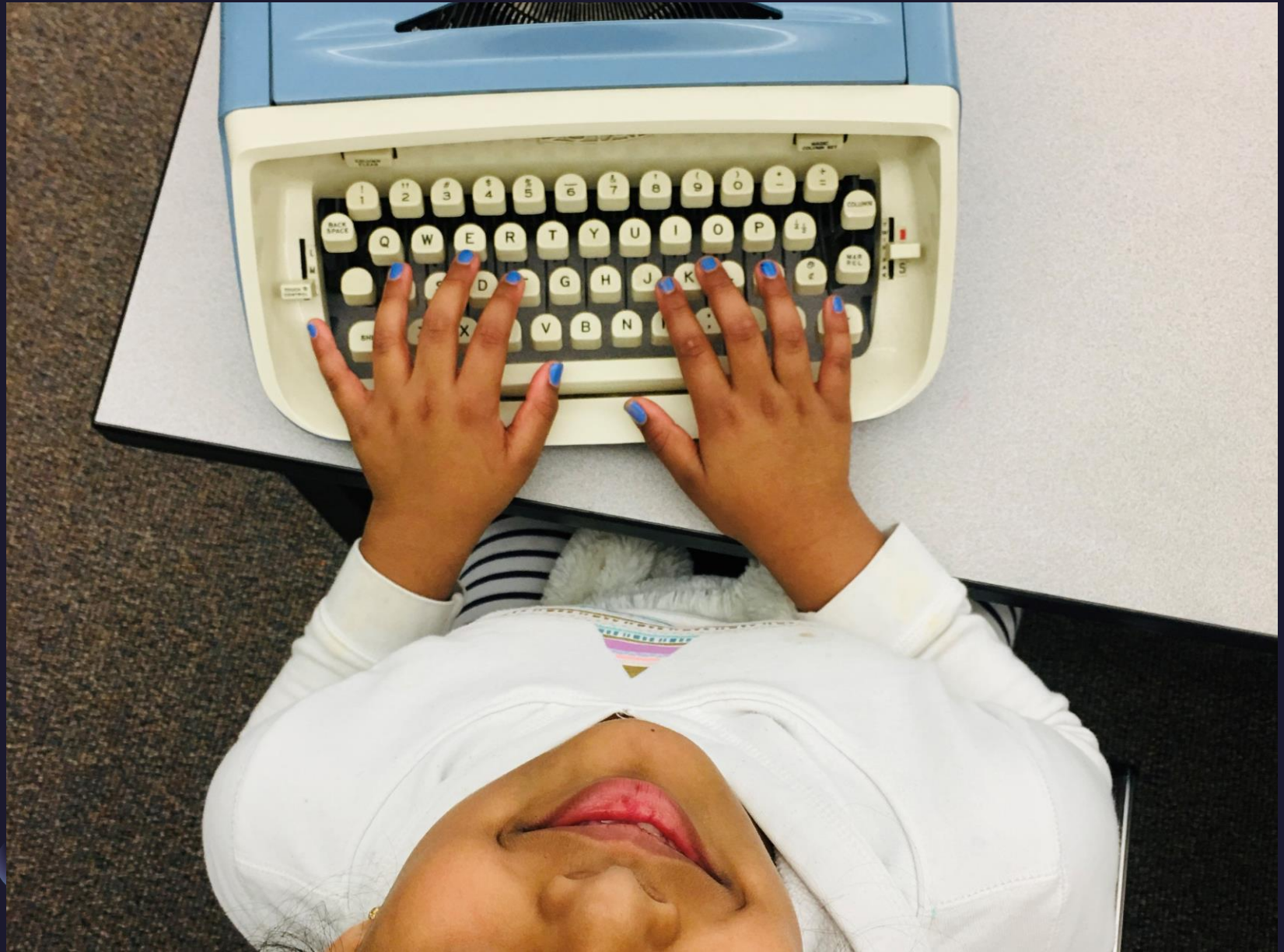




My early  
interest in  
typewriters  
began through my  
desire to  
motivate young  
children to  
write. I teach  
first grade in a  
suburb of  
Seattle,  
Washington.

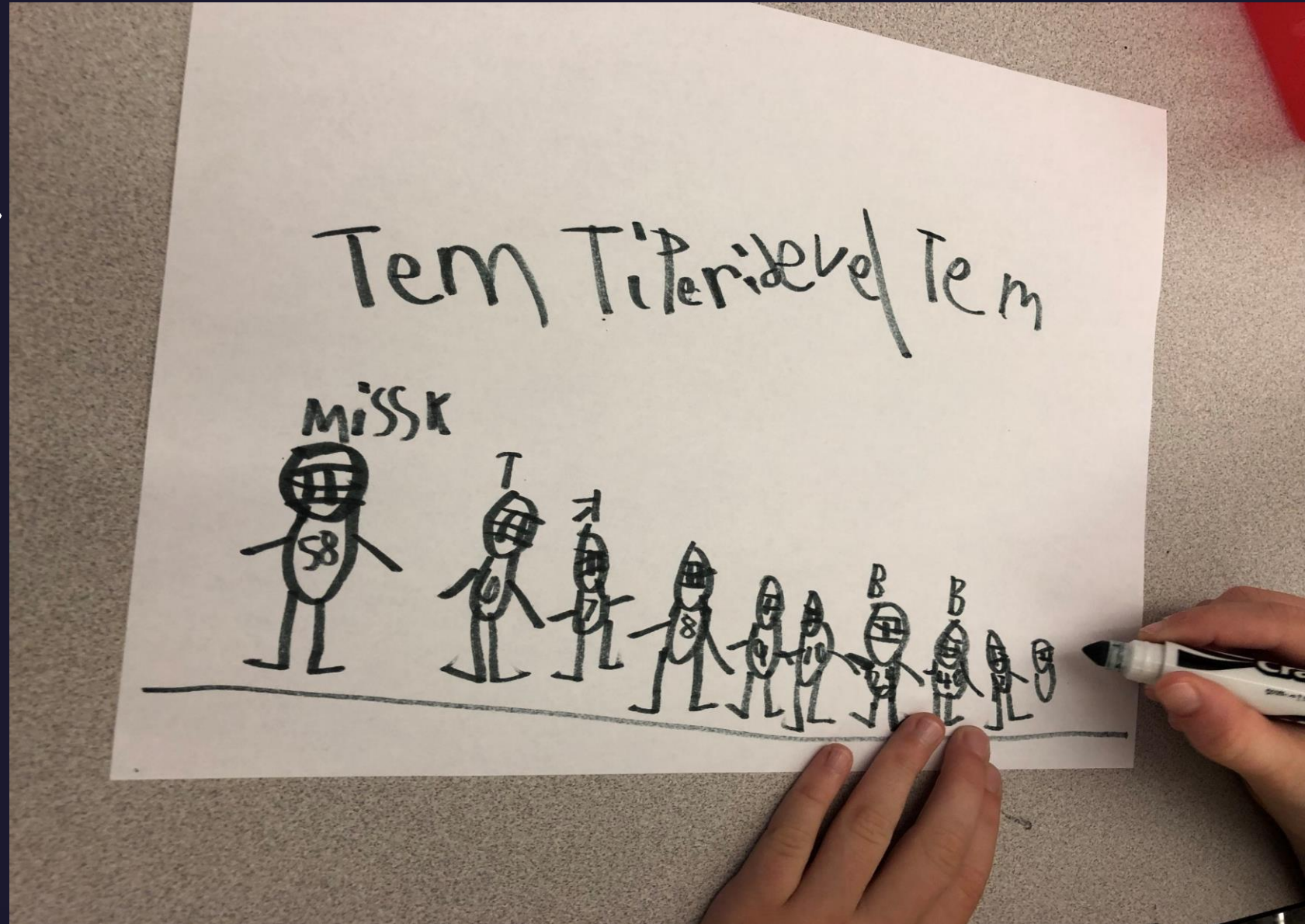


Children are  
naturally  
curious and  
love  
machines.

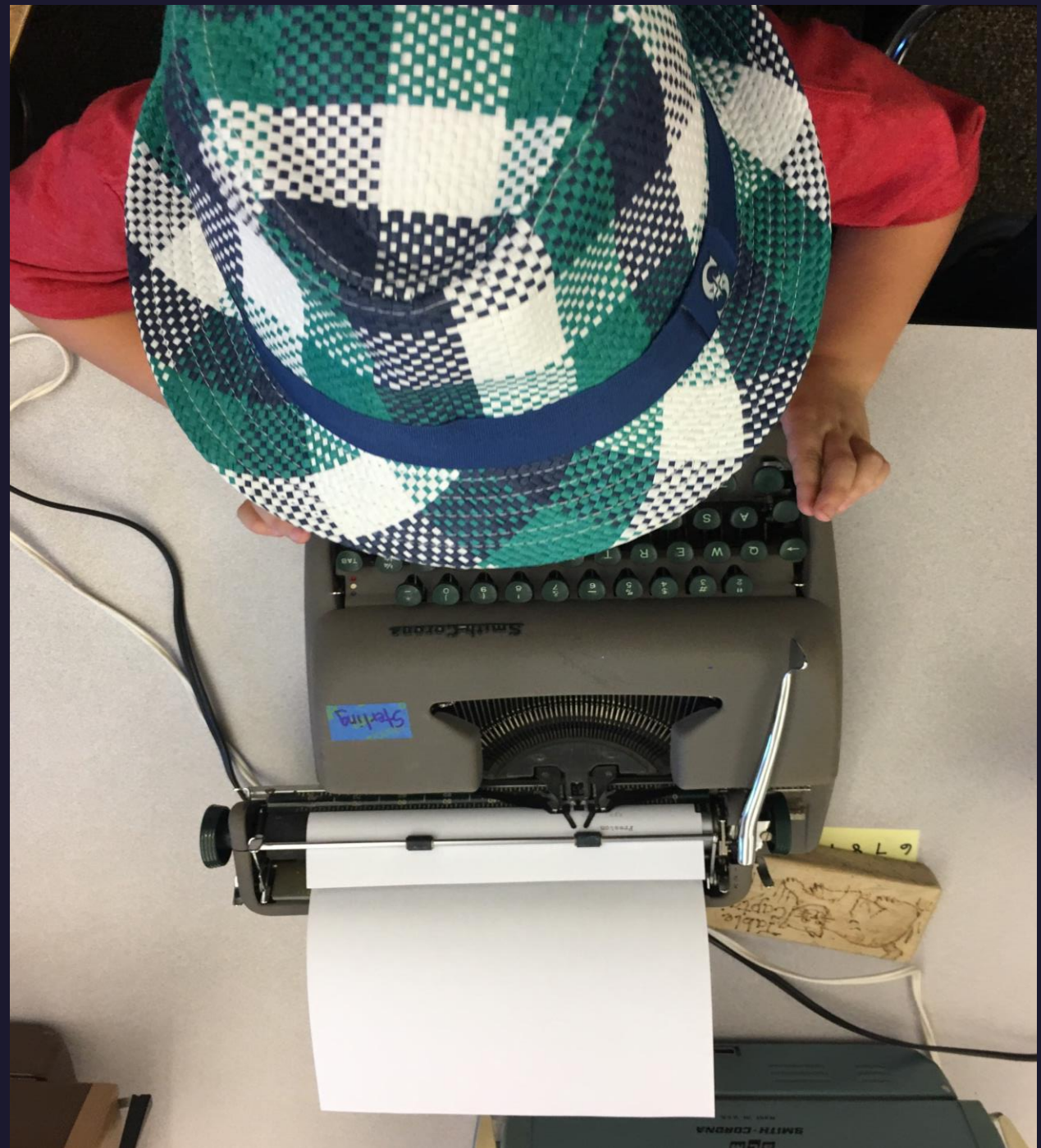




Kids feel  
empowered when  
given tools to  
spark their  
creativity,  
and drive to  
express  
themselves!

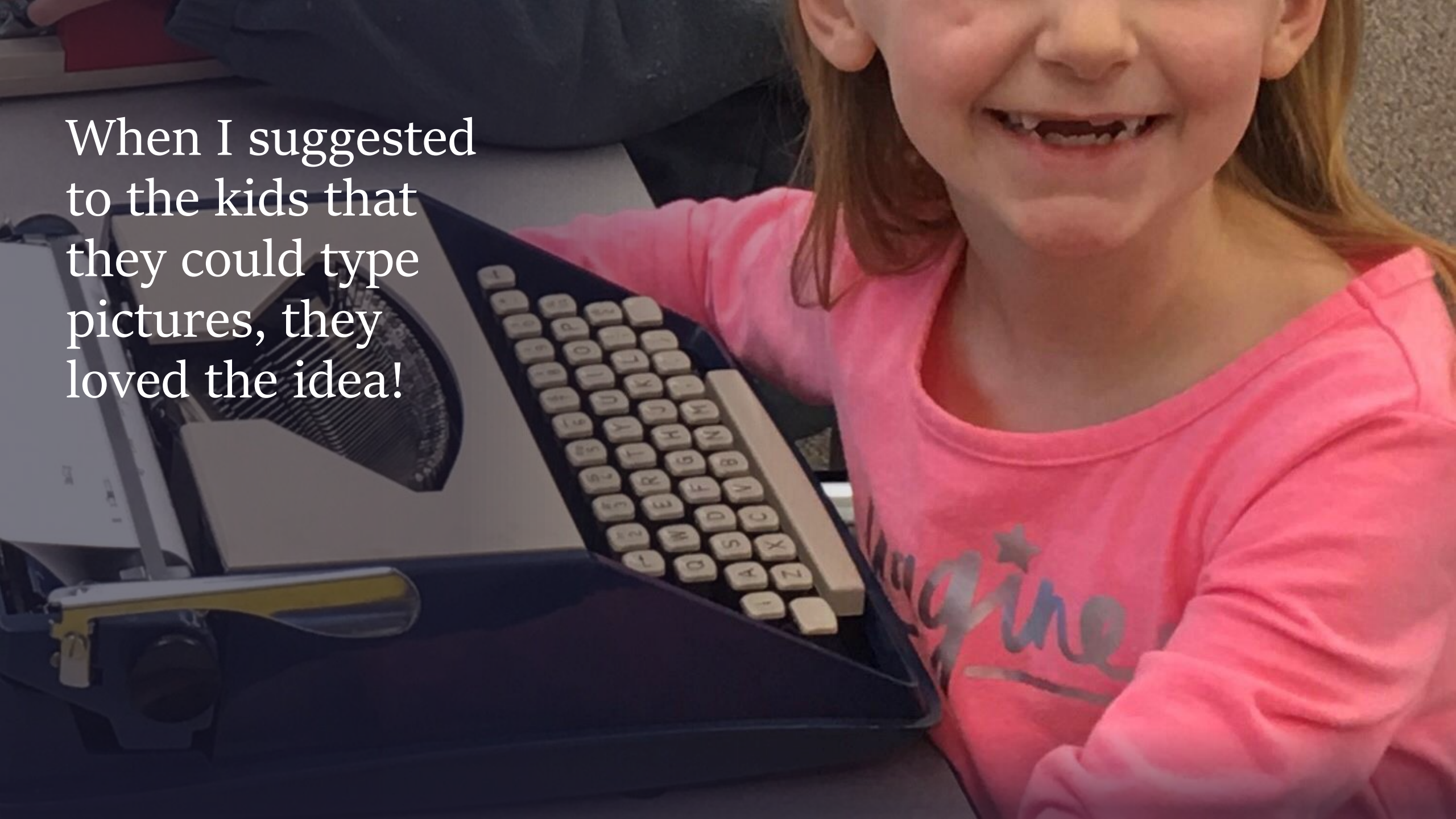


Kids, unlike  
adults are  
often  
uninhibited  
and like to  
pour their  
ideas and  
experiences on  
to paper.





When I suggested  
to the kids that  
they could type  
pictures, they  
loved the idea!



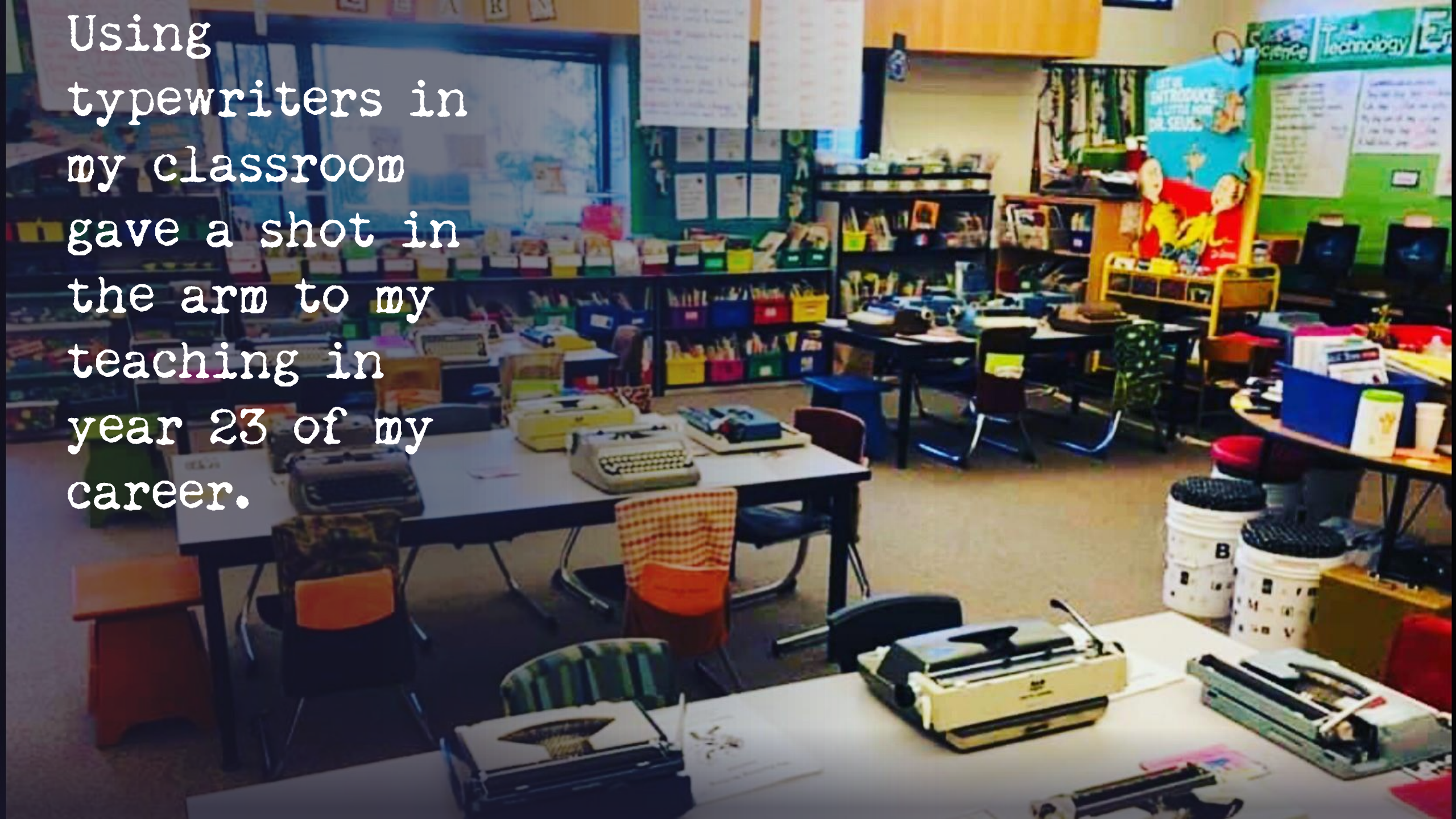


The variety of  
machines available  
within our communities  
make using typewriters  
fun and exciting!





Using  
typewriters in  
my classroom  
gave a shot in  
the arm to my  
teaching in  
year 23 of my  
career.





My  
typewriter  
collection  
grew and my  
obsession  
with finding  
uses for them  
flourished.

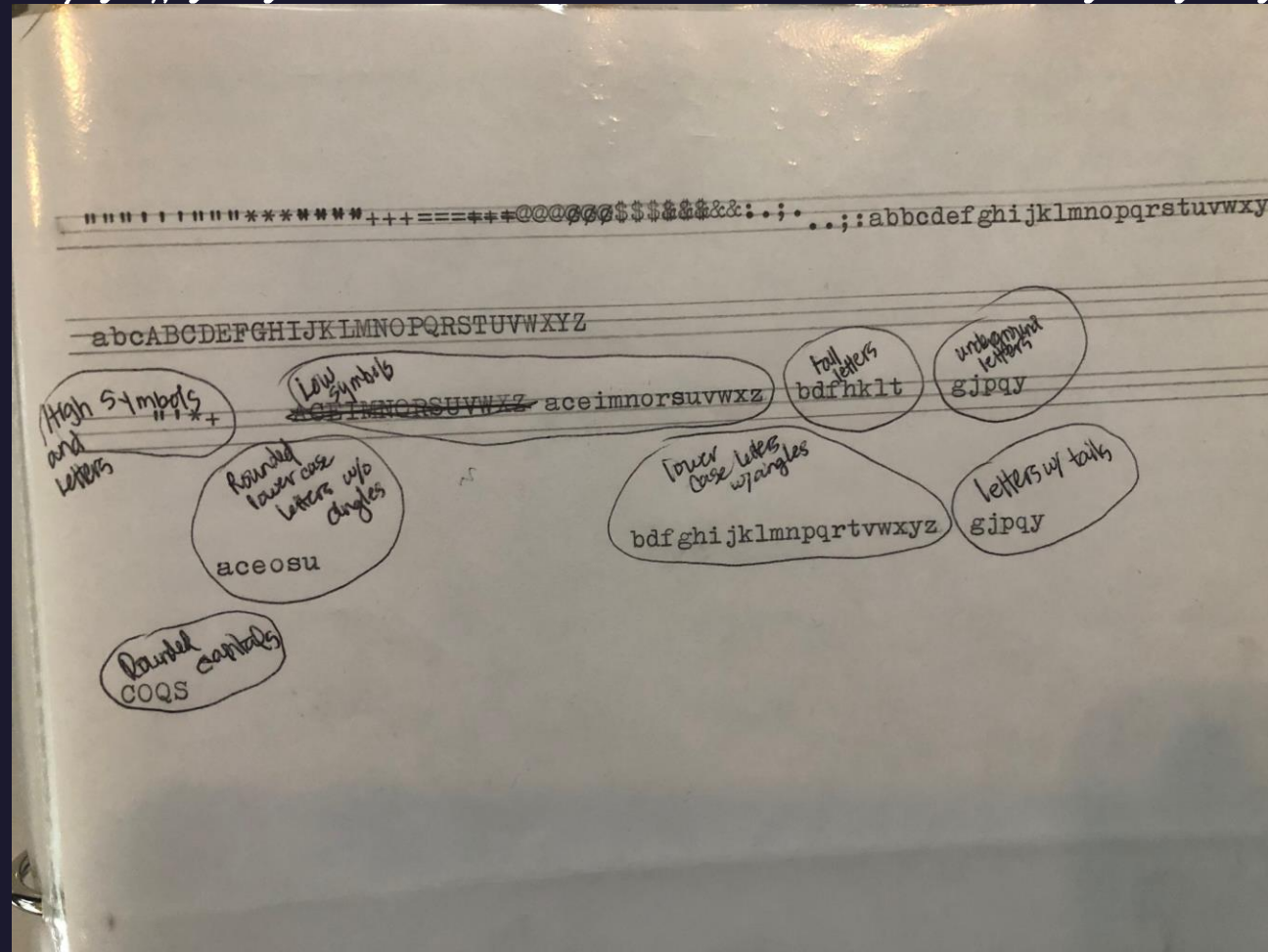




One day I saw  
my shadow on  
the side of my  
home as I  
returned from  
the garden  
with my hands  
full of roses,  
and knew I had  
to try to type  
the image.

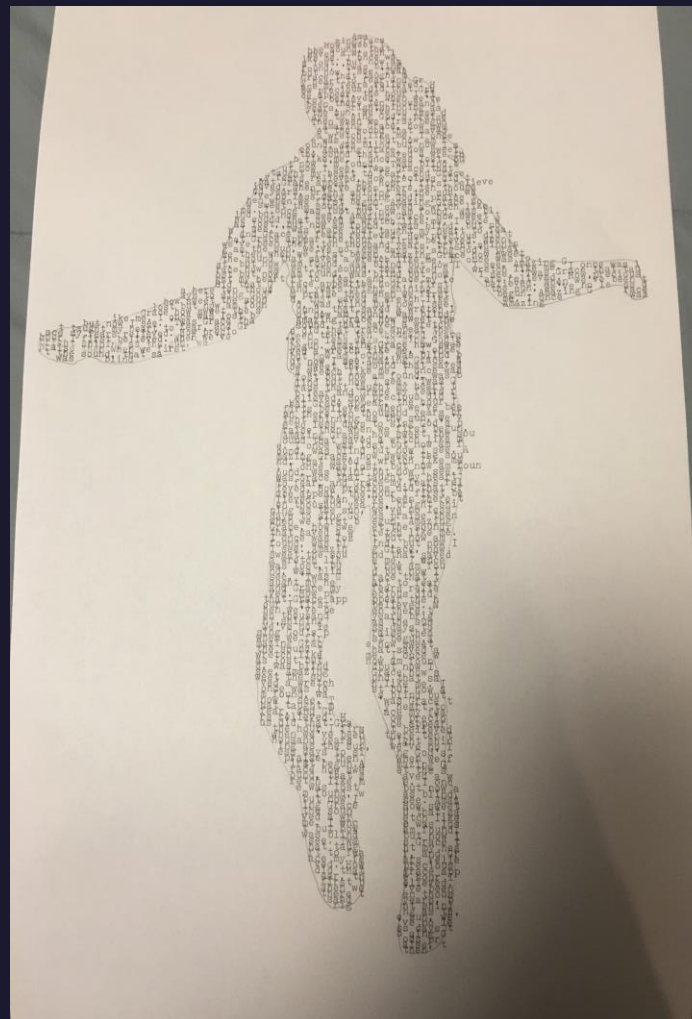


I began studying the features of letters, numbers and symbols in order to begin typing pictures. It was important to me to figure out which letters, symbols and numbers are widest, offer the most coverage, and that kind of thing in order to better know my typewriter keyboard. In creating portraits on a typewriter, I find myself using the @ sign a lot as well as the %, #, ", as well as the letters W, M, Z, and S.





I began by typing silhouettes. I took this photo of my daughter Grace and typed the lyrics to the song 'Amazing Grace' inside of her silhouette.



I began getting more comfortable with my typewriter's possibilities, but continued to type silhouettes out of fear that I would not be able to include light or shadow in creating portraits.





I enjoyed typing the Statue of Liberty with the lyrics of America the Beautiful in the background.

I realize now that typing these silhouettes was a bit like riding a bike with training wheels as it was a definite precursor to feeling more and more comfortable using my typewriter as a drawing tool.





One day I googled "Typewriter art" and realized that there were many people in various parts of the country and world creating typewriter art; Keira Rathbone and James Cook in England, Robert Doerfler in Germany, Thanathorn Suppakijjumnong in Thailand, William Barr of Scotland, Uday Talwalker of India, and Leslie Nichols of the United States inspired me. Each of them uses their own techniques which makes it fun to study the work of various artists. I reached out to a few of them, exchanged art and correspondence with them.





I decided to begin trying to type portraits with light and dark in them by using photos with a high degree of contrast. I traced out major details in the photos by holding them up to the glass of a sliding glass door. I later discovered that I could do the same thing with a light board and an overhead projector.





I always start  
by typing out  
the details of  
eyes. If I  
capture a  
person's eyes,  
it encourages  
me to continue.  
If I don't, I  
start over.





I was encouraged by the resemblance I was able to capture by doing this, even when things went wrong and I wasn't always satisfied with every aspect of my work.





I gradually began to work on shading faces. I had to take the portraits out of the typewriter and type in the same areas over and over again in order to create the desired affects.



I enjoyed typing Amelia Earhart who is  
one of my childhood heroines.





I search out  
people with  
interesting  
faces. I  
especially like  
the challenge  
of old men  
with long  
white beards,  
furrowed brows  
and facial  
lines.

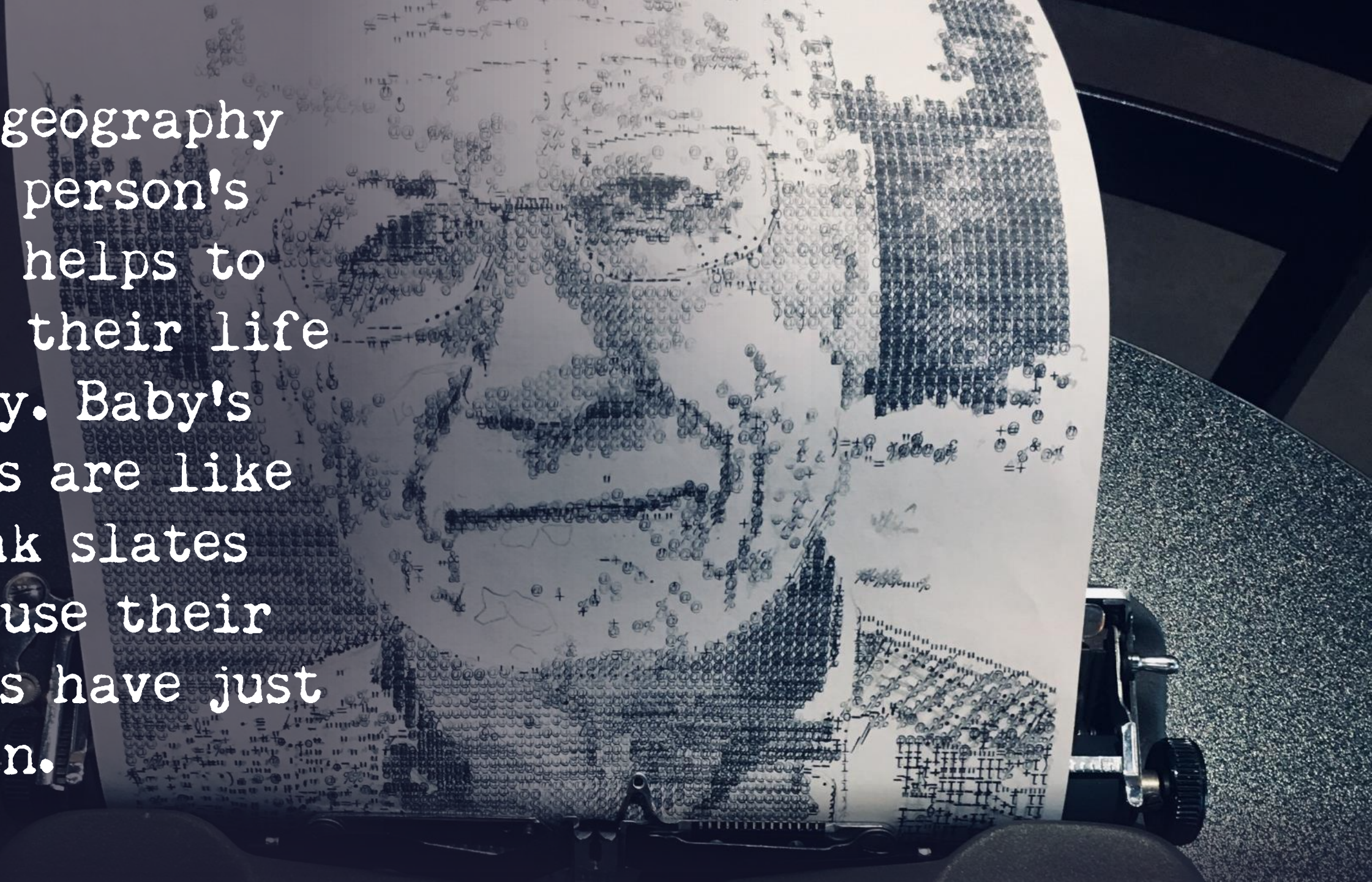
of arrogance. It interferes  
task in life- becoming a  
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Kelye Kneeland  
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I met this Amtrak Conductor while traveling by train. I took his picture and asked him if I could type his portrait.





The geography  
of a person's  
face helps to  
tell their life  
story. Baby's  
faces are like  
blank slates  
because their  
lives have just  
begun.





I once typed a baby on a  
Hermes Baby to illustrate  
this point!





Paul Lundy is my  
local typewriter  
repairman. It was  
fun to type  
people I knew to  
try to capture  
their likenesses.



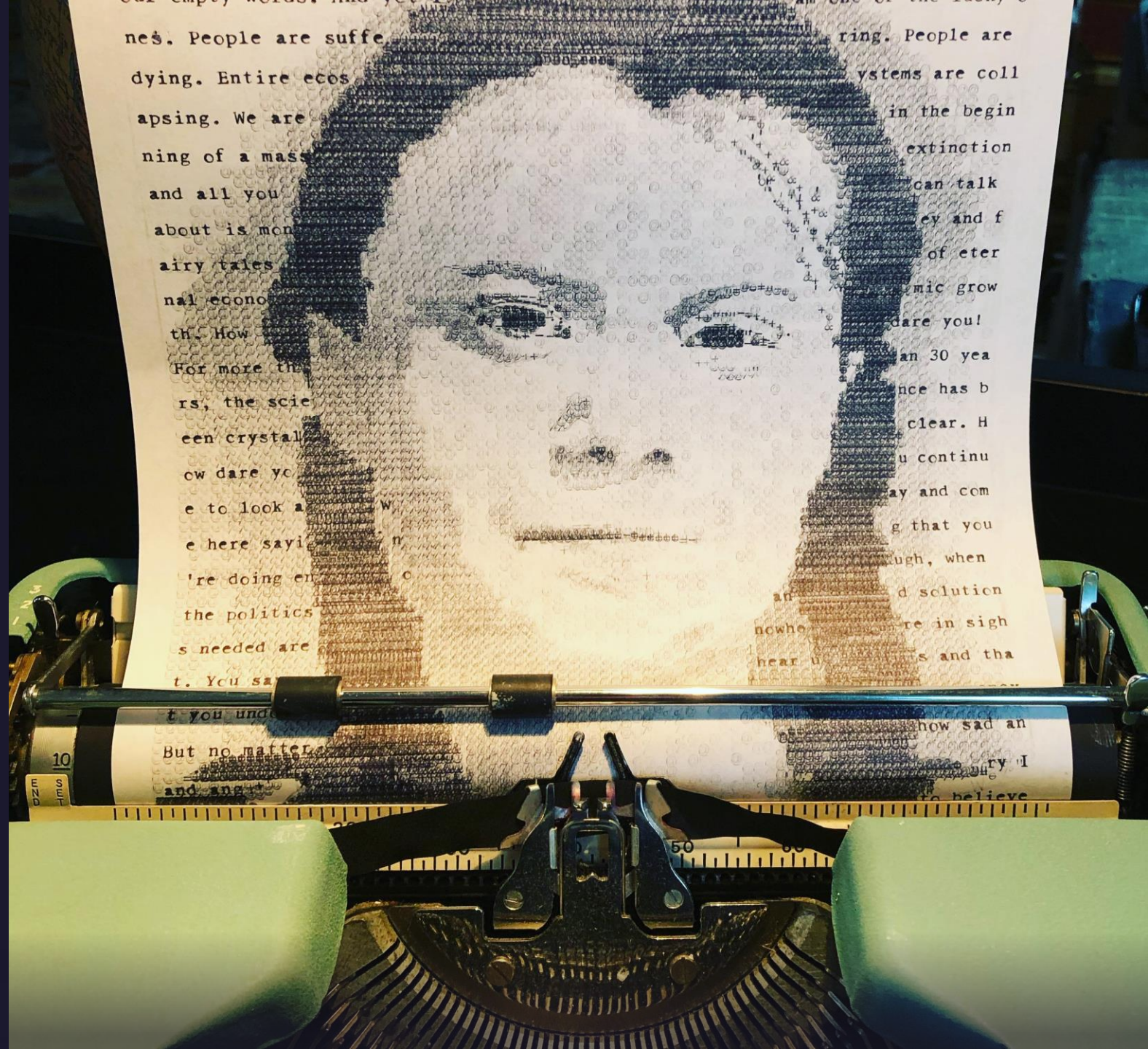


Portraits usually  
take me between  
20 and 40 hours  
to do from  
beginning to end.  
I work full time  
so I only type  
about 20 minutes  
each day and  
don't take  
commissions due to  
my tightly  
scheduled days.



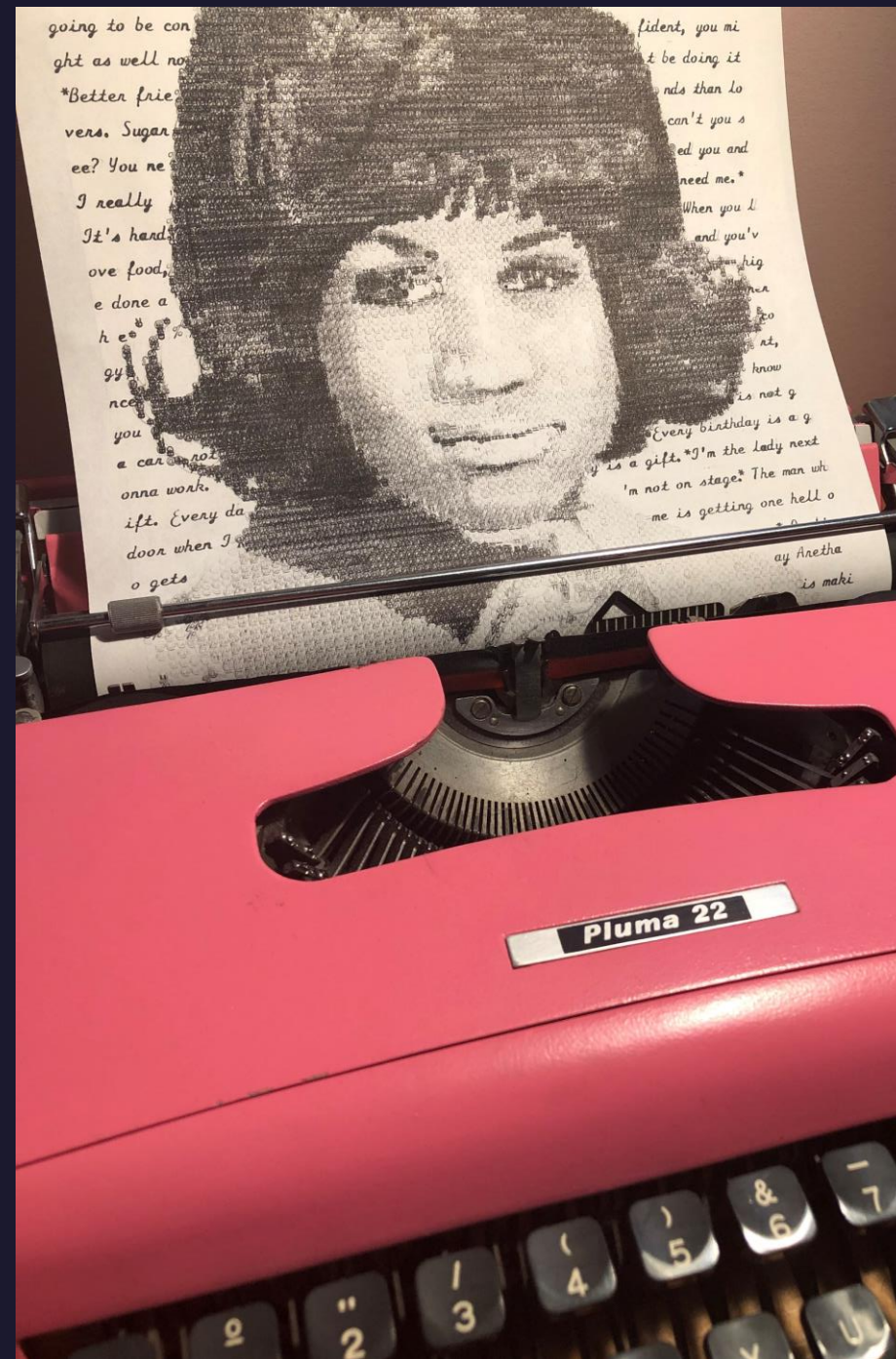


Over time I  
have become  
more  
comfortable  
with shading  
and have  
continued  
typing daily.



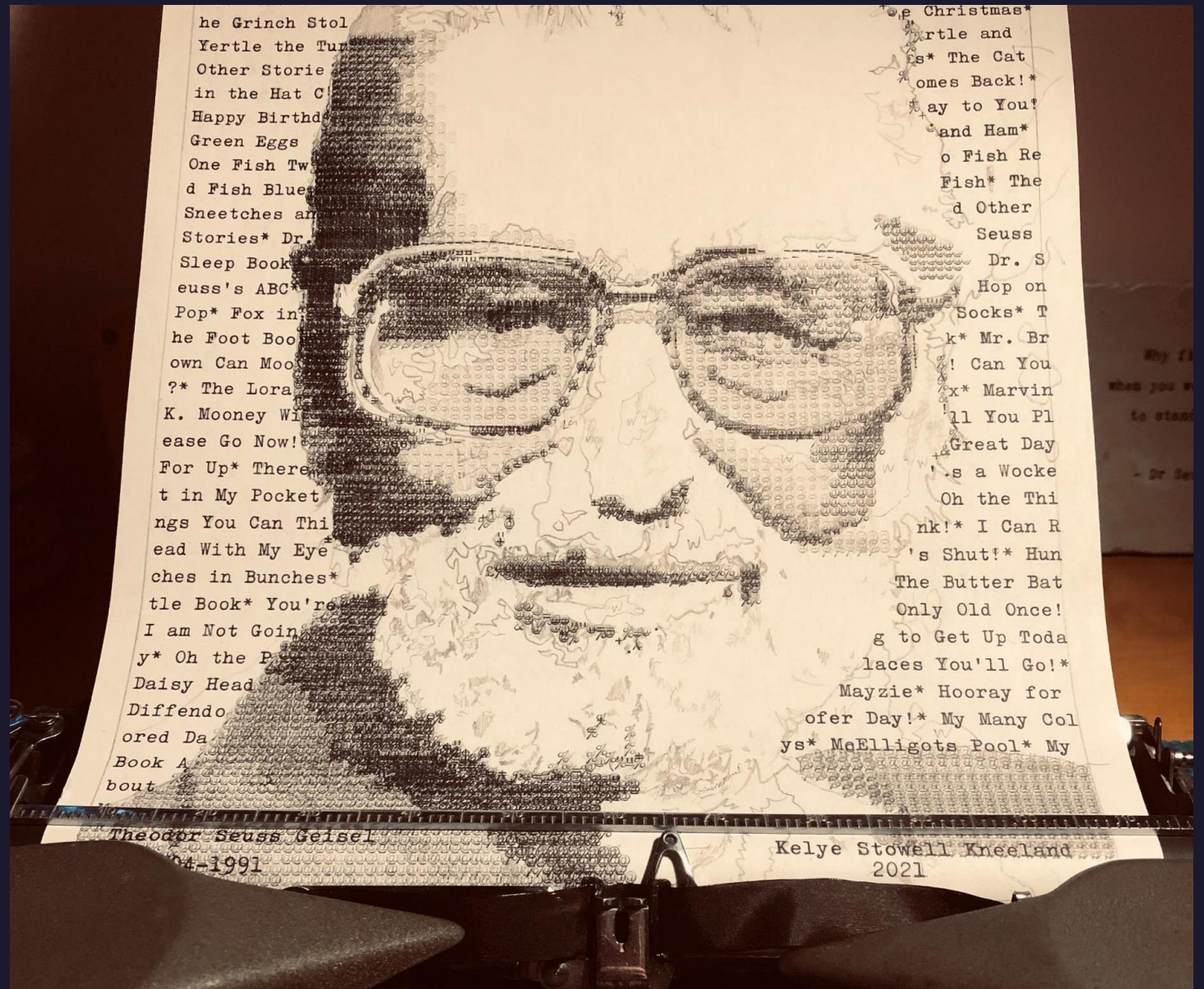


Sometimes I take up to a year or more to complete a portrait if I am not satisfied that I have captured the subject entirely. I am still struggling with this portrait of Aretha Franklin but hope to finish her this year.





Dr. Seuss is  
still a work  
in progress.



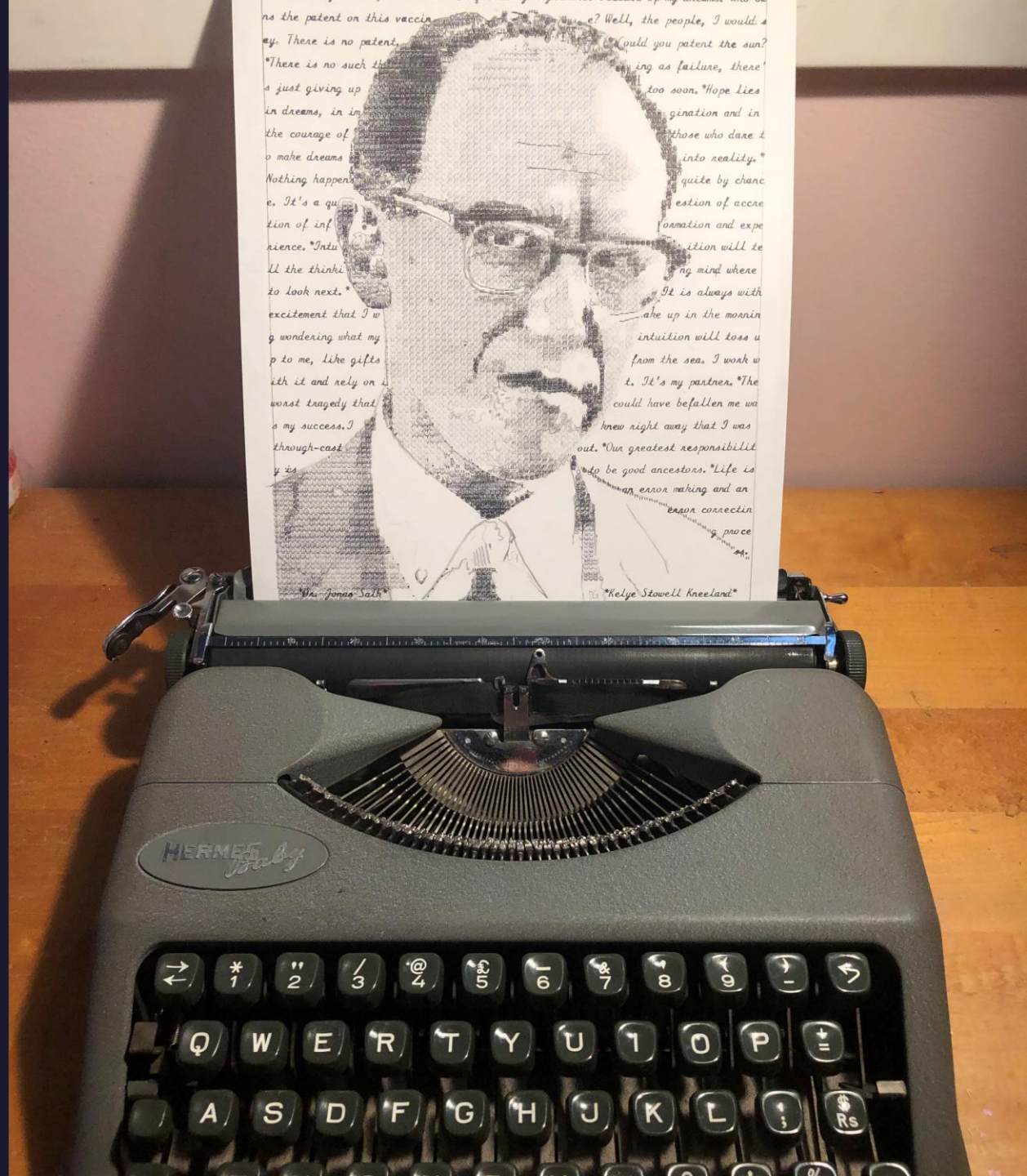
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Yertle the Tur  
Other Storie  
in the Hat C  
Happy Birthd  
Green Eggs  
One Fish Tw  
d Fish Blue  
Sneetches an  
Stories\* Dr  
Sleep Book  
euss's ABC  
Pop\* Fox in  
he Foot Boo  
own Can Moo  
?\* The Lora  
K. Mooney Wi  
ease Go Now!  
For Up\* There  
t in My Pocket  
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ead With My Eye  
ches in Bunches\*  
tle Book\* You're  
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y\* Oh the P  
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Great Day  
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Oh the Thi  
nk!\* I Can R  
's Shut!\* Hun  
The Butter Bat  
Only Old Once!  
g to Get Up Toda  
laces You'll Go!\*  
Mayzie\* Hooray for  
ofer Day!\* My Many Col  
ys\* MaElligots Pool\* My

Theodor Seuss Geisel  
1991  
Kelye Stowell Kneeland  
2021



I recently finished  
this portrait of Dr.  
Jonas Salk the  
inventor of the first  
polio vaccine in the  
1950's.





Frida Kahlo is  
another one of  
my favorites. In  
recent years I  
have typed  
quotes, song  
lyrics or excerpts  
from my subjects  
books in to the  
backgrounds of  
their portraits.





When the pandemic began in the spring of 2020 and the lockdown in Washington State occurred, I found myself spending time at my local botanical garden. Typing birds to pass the time seemed like a fitting thing to do.









enjoy printing  
copies of my work  
in different colors  
at my local Fedex  
store and matching  
those portraits to  
machines that suit  
the portraits. This  
is the musician,  
Nina Simone in an  
Olivetti Valentin.  
I like the way she  
came out.



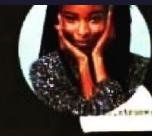


I also have fun  
trying to match  
portraits of  
people to  
machines. This is  
Queen Elizabeth  
on her  
Coronation day  
in a Princess 300  
machine.





I usually try to send a portrait to famous people when I have typed them but they rarely write back to acknowledge that they received the portrait. I didn't send a portrait to Amanda Gorman but somehow someone else shared my work with her and she shared it on her Instagram wall. It was nice to know that she liked it!

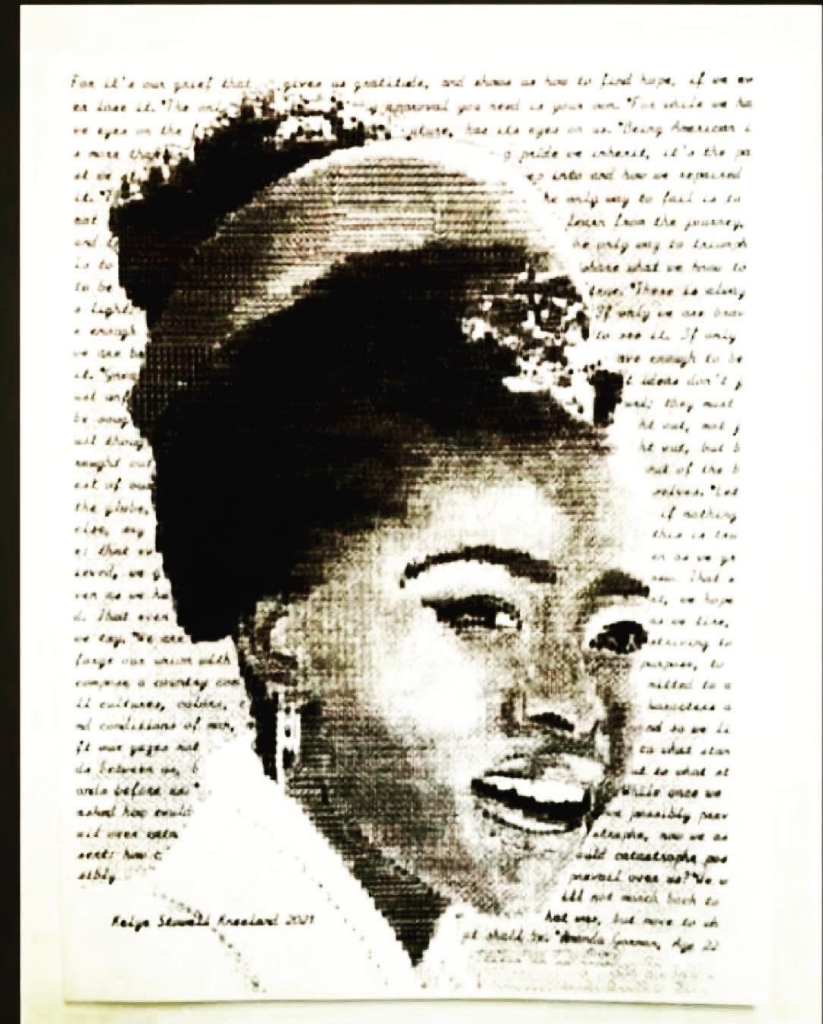


amandascgorman

heart.strokes



Stunning typewriter art



@kelyekneeland

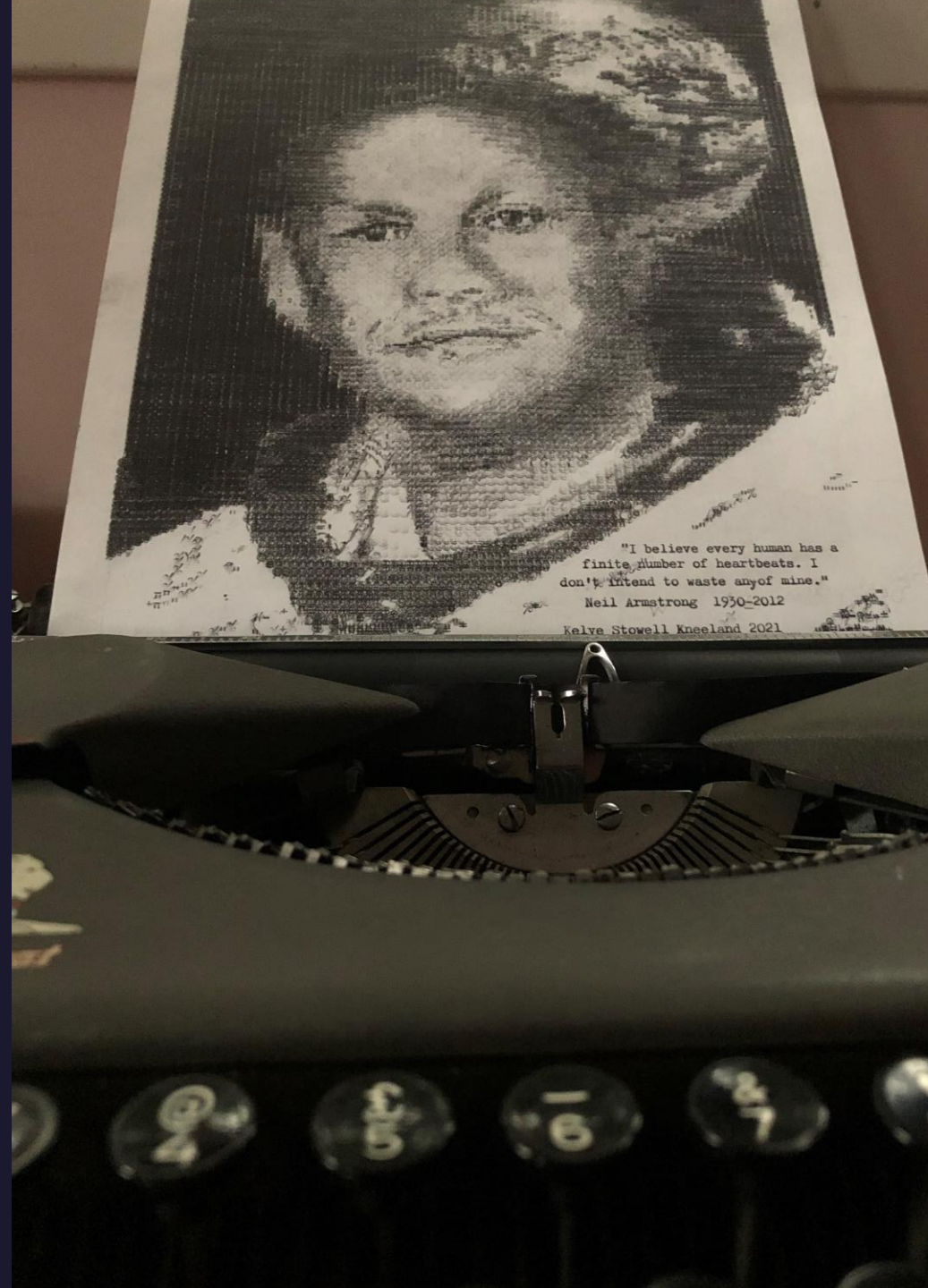


In the summer of 2019 I went to Paris to type and sell portraits on the street. It was so much fun and the people I met from around the world were fascinated by this way of creating art.





Typing black spaces is really time consuming and hard on my hands. I tried using an electric typewriter when outer space in Neil Armstrong's portrait and discovered I did not like the effect.



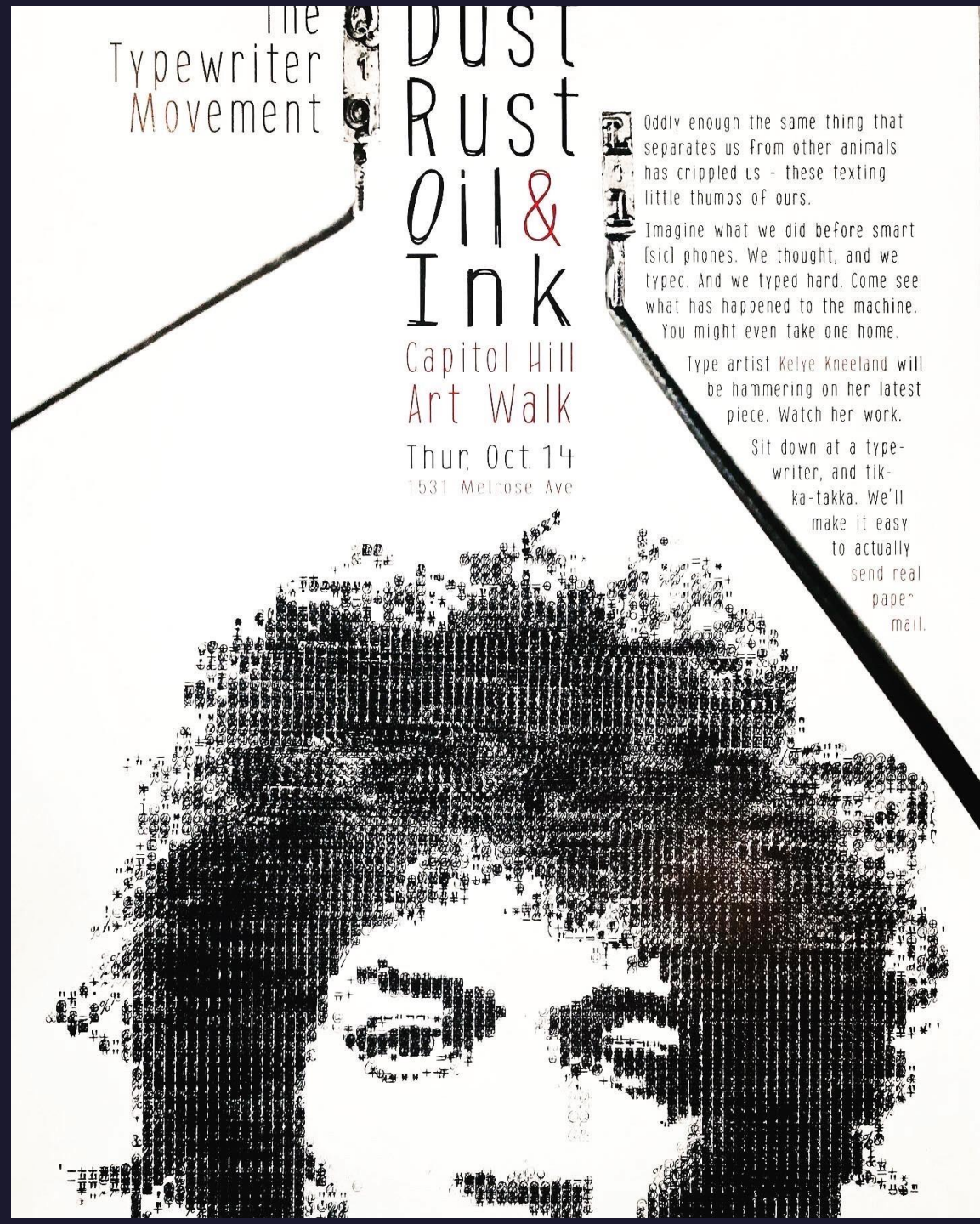


I always type  
people I admire  
who have  
contributed to  
the world in  
important  
ways. Nelson  
Mandela is one  
of 80 portraits  
I have typed.





I had fun demonstrating how I create typedrawn or typewritten portraits in Seattle this past year at an event by creative director, Anthony Godoy. It was lots of fun! I sold some prints of my work and many people expressed interest in learning more about typewriters and their many uses!





Creating typewriter art has provided me with hours of joy, especially throughout the lockdowns of the corona virus pandemic. I have created over 80 portraits in the past five years and look forward to creating many more.





It is certainly true that no  
two typewriter  
artists work with the same  
style. I hope if  
This style of art interests you  
that you will  
Try your hand at it and  
discover your own  
Interests and style in  
creating typedrawn  
art. Have fun with the process  
and let it  
Lead you down new and  
enlightening paths!

