

Day Studio Visual Arts Program: Making Art

by Tony Fragua

Although we have changed our building's name to the North Fourth Art Center, the quality of our Visual Arts Program has not changed. We continue to offer superior art classes to people with disabilities that challenge every individual willing to learn. The visual arts are a powerful tool of self expression for a population that has been overlooked and seldom heard. VSA apprentice artist opportunities are limitless when given the power for projecting their voice or portraying an experience. Such experiences are vast and to communicate those feelings and ideas can take some investment.

There is always something to do and learn through our program. The teachers are very experienced in their mediums and talented at teaching a variety of subjects to the apprentice artists. We have excellent substitute teachers who help keep our program running smoothly, which is critical for an enrollment of over 90 apprentice artists with a daily average of 50 students attending classes. When new students come to VSA sometimes they become overwhelmed at the amount of classes available to them and the challenges they find themselves undertaking. They soon find their way, however, and enjoy the celebration of creativity, realizing a feeling of internal power and a sense of accomplishment once their first projects are completed.

The Visual Arts Program offers many classes, such as painting, ceramics, printmaking, and fiber arts. The core of the program relies on the diversity of the teachers' expertise and their experience in communicating creative expression. Each teacher has a specialty in different mediums, such as quilting taught by Joan Clawson. Joan teaches other fabric classes, producing tie-dyed scarves, woven bags, and felt hats. She also teaches a products class and has had some success with her students and the items that they make. Joan's class is quite popular and they are always looking for new ideas to try.

Wendy Zollinger teaches a blend of traditional forms of art classes with new and innovative styles geared for learning about the great masters of art. Using history to teach and inform the apprentice artists about past creations, she relates those movements to the apprentice artists' view of themselves. By incorporating historical themes into their work the students can learn to appreciate the scope of what they are doing in relation to their own expressions.

Sam Baustista teaches a Native American class for Native American apprentice artists to maintain a sense of community and cultural ties that for some is often lost or out of reach. Sam's class is open to all, but the main focus is to build relationships to the outside community

and to actively participate in and attend different Native American activities. These include The Gathering of Nations, feast days at local pueblos and trips to museums to reinforce the cultural connection and give respect to apprentice artists who seek out their own culture. Sam is from Laguna Pueblo and knows how important community is and how much it means to honor that connection. The Native American class is just the stepping stone towards the future of other possibilities the class has to offer. Sam always welcomes people from Indian country who can make a difference to his students; plans for a residency are in development.

Annie King is a new member of VSA's teaching staff and she already has proven herself in the classroom. By applying her own style of teaching she has grown and adjusted to the apprentice artists' needs. She has learned how to draw inspiration from her students and give them the direction they need to become better artists and to become as independent as possible. Annie has a lot of room to become a major factor here in relation to her students' potential. We look forward to more inspiration and creative innovation in her classes.

Laurence Wellborn teaches ceramics and basic handbuilding techniques needed to create works of art in clay. He encourages spontaneity in his students, a good approach for his classes in Open Studio, where apprentice artists use a wide choice of mediums to explore self expression.

I teach printmaking, drawing and ceramics. I believe that power always remains within the artist. We as teachers can only guide our students part of the way. The real work is within each individual and how they want to expand their experience. Through a lot of hard work and dedication both our teachers and students have achieved quite a forum for success.

The future looks bright. We are expanding the Visual Arts Program to afternoons and weekends and are planning activities in communities, such as a mural project with La Luz Elementary School, a community outreach program in conjunction with Share your Care and an environmentally themed art competition called *New MexiCans*. As long as there is a need to be met, an investment in learning and a willingness to have fun through artistic expression, VSA's North Fourth Art Center will remain an outstanding place to be. If the power of the individual remains in their own hands then the creative nature within will come forth.

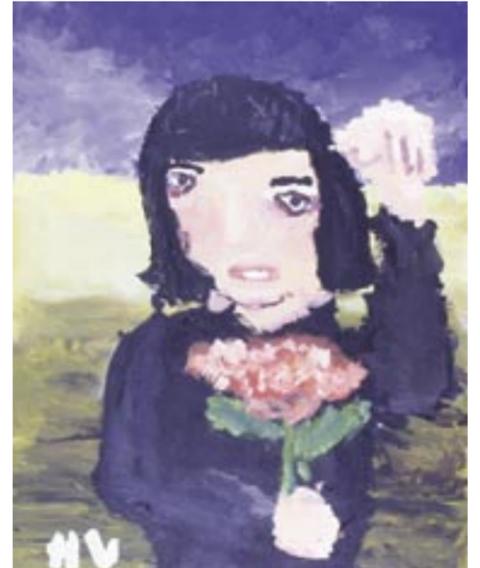
Exhibits Program: Framing...Exhibiting...Selling Art

by Sue Hermes

The walls are filling up with artwork at VSA's North Fourth Art Center. With my new position as Exhibition and Portfolio Manager, I have been having fun organizing the artwork of VSA Apprentice Artists. Part of my job is to develop portfolios for emerging artists attending VSA. This includes taking slides, gathering artist statements and keeping records as to who has been in what exhibitions and when. I also am pursuing outside venues for our artists to show their work and we are researching production of images for cards, posters and other items.

Exhibitions have been exciting this year. We had our first show on the UNM campus at Masley Hall Gallery, titled, *Through Our Eyes: Works by the VSA Apprentice Artists*. Twenty-five pieces hung for the month of March in this wonderful space in the Art Education building and the opening was well attended, the art well received. Later in the month we held a poetry reading in the gallery space. Several of the VSA poets also had artwork in the show. The event was also well received and the entire experience with UNM was very positive. I look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Art Education Department.

A second show also hung during March at the Los Griegos library. This show consisted of the work of fifteen Apprentice Artists and included paintings, drawings, pottery and weavings. Los Griegos library also has been generous to us in the past in offering its public wall space for displaying artwork.



VSA's North Fourth Art Center sent fourteen pieces of framed artwork to the Developmental Disability Planning Council Building in Santa Fe. The work will be on display in the hallways and offices for at least six months and is for sale to any interested parties. This opportunity has been yet another good match for VSA Apprentice Artists.

Last, but certainly not least, the UNM School of Medicine TEASC Program selected an image by VSA apprentice artist Angelica Harrison for a poster to celebrate their program's tenth anniversary. TEASC ran an edition of one thousand of the posters, which will be distributed to consultative services throughout the state. (The artwork on the poster appears on the cover of this newsletter).

There are plans in the works for future exhibits. Until then, come visit our gallery, get on our mailing list and sign up online at www.vartsnm.org for email updates on VSA's North Fourth Art Center.

