Envisioning Our Super-Powers

Youth participants learn the layering and filter effects of Photoshop, and turn their photo self-portraits and photo composites into comic strips. By adding text, graphical elements, and sequencing their images, students make their own graphic novel page to tell the story of changing the world for the better. What super power would you adopt to make the world a better place for all living things? What would that look like? Finished images are printed and combined into a comic book to be available to REACH members in the AC Library.

“I FEEL REALLY GREAT BY LEARNING NEW THINGS FROM DIGITAL ARTS.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I THINK ART IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT HELPS YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF IN MANY WAYS.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Teaching artist reflection:
“Students stretched their imaginations in attempting to visualize their “super-powers” and explored their own acting abilities by using their poses to express them. The process of acting out scenes, and having a partner photograph them provided a bonding experience which continued as they worked on the compositing process in the computer. While many took longer than they hoped to complete the project, there was a high level of satisfaction with the completed projects!”
INTRODUCTION TO SEWING

Acclaimed quilter and teaching artist Marion Coleman taught an introduction to sewing class at REACH Ashland Youth Center to boys and girls, ages 11-18 for two weeks in June 2013. Students learned basic hand sewing techniques as well as how to set up and use a sewing machine. Projects included fiber postcards, individual log cabin quilts, and embellishing techniques on their own clothing.

“I LEARNED TO ALWAYS STAY FOCUSED, CONCENTRATE AND WHEN IT COMES TO SEWING, WORK CAREFULLY, AND JUST HAVE FUN!”
- Youth Participant

“I IMPROVED MY TECHNIQUE OF SEWING AND I LEARNED HOW TO ATTACH BUTTONS.”
- Youth Participant

“The most important thing I learned is to believe in yourself and have as much crazy fun as you want.”
- Youth Participant

“One thing that is unique about my work is that I showed my creative side when working.”
- Youth Participant

“Teaching Assistant Reflection

“It was amazing how much we learned in just two weeks. I found sewing to be calming, fun and therapeutic for everyone in the room. Quilting was a great way to talk about the principles of design, color, and texture in a new and unique way. I could tell everyone was enjoying themselves because when class time ended, nobody wanted to leave! After the two weeks were over, a lot of the students bought their own supplies so that they could continue to work on sewing projects at home.”

Teaching Assistant Reflection
DIGITAL ART PROJECTS
@ REACH Ashland Youth Center
by the Alameda County Arts Commission

Making Musical Magic

In this introductory class at REACH, students are introduced into the magic of digital music production through Apple’s Garageband, a powerful but simple music production application. Students are initially asked to compose a song using “loops”, pre-recorded snippets of sound or music into an A-B-A composition. Then they embellish their songs with accompanied keyboard notes, assigned to any instrument they like. The whole class gets to hear each song when each composer shares his or her own composition with the class. Students can take their songs with them on their own mp3 players or phones too!

“THE MOST MEMORABLE PART OF THE CLASS WAS SHARING OUR MUSIC.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I NEVER NOTICED BEFORE THAT PLAYING WITH LOOPS WAS SO FUN.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I THINK ART IS IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT ACTS AS A VENT FOR LIFE.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“The most important thing I learned in this class is to never count something out and give it a try.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Teaching artist reflection:
“It was amazing to see the students reaction to their own creations after composing a song with loops; they were thrilled with their accomplishments! I think the part of the class where everyone shared their own songs with the whole class brought everyone closer together, and showed everyone’s innate musical ability.”
ARCHITECTURAL LETTER SCULPTURES

Students worked in groups to design and create sculptural letters out of cardboard and paper cups. Next they drew patterns and designs and painted the letters to match the REACH “team colors”. The letters spelled out “REACH Ashland Youth Center, Thriving Youth Vibrant Community”. The students then used these letters to create an exciting stop-motion animation in the Digital Media Lab working with teaching artist Joaquin Newman. The letters will now be displayed in the Youth Center.

“I LEARNED THAT YOU CAN MAKE SCULPTURE OUT OF CARDBOARD AND IT’S NOT EVEN THAT HARD.”
- YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“The hardest part of this project was figuring out how to make my letter sculpture stand up on its own.”
- YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I LEARNED HOW TO MAKE A DRAWING THREE DIMENSIONAL.”
- YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“The most important thing I learned was you can make sculptures and art out of basic things.”
- YOUTH PARTICIPANT

TEACHING ARTIST REFLECTION:
“It was a great lesson on collaboration, group ownership, and honoring our community. I enjoyed watching students design skills develop in both two and three-dimensional art forms. By working together, I felt like we built relationships and community and completed a project that we never could have done without a strong group effort.”
Stop-Motion Animation
Youth-made painted sculptural letters from Visual Arts class are the stars of this stop-motion animation project by REACH youth members. Students plan, arrange, & photograph the sculptural letters in a series of sequential scenes where the letters appear to dance into frame and spell out “REACH Ashland Youth Center” in the center’s amphitheater seating. Students demonstrated understanding of the final outcome, and patiently took the photos on this sweltering day!

“I LIKE MAKING ART.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“It’s hot out here!”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“What helped me stay focused on my project was that it was so engaging.”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I never noticed before that I could even do this!”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“Making animation is fun!”
—YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Teaching artist reflection:
“These students engaged in a complex sequential photography project. They persisted in acheiving their creative goals by patiently taking the 200 plus photos for this project, and then assembling them in iMovie. It was a great bonding experience for the students, and a fun way to explore the range of digital arts.”
A fun and un-intimidating entry point for young people trying digital art for the first time is digital illustration and cartooning. Youth members tried their hands at digitally tracing their self-portraits, their own hand drawings, or other images of their creation. Their digital illustrations could be colored and further manipulated using the powerful and flexible tools of the software Adobe Illustrator. Students stretched their digital arts skills, and explored new and unfamiliar tools, all while building a library of exciting REACH digital characters.

"I think art is important because it lets people be themselves."  
- Youth Participant - Age 16

"I improved my techniques by not being afraid to try something different."  
- Youth Participant - Age 12

"I learned how to draw with pixels, even though it was difficult."  
- Youth Participant - Age 12

Teaching artist reflection:  
“As a digital illustrator, I’ve always enjoyed the process of drawing and painting in the computer, as well as on paper or canvas. The immediate excitement that the students expressed after painting their likeness on a photo of themselves reflected my own joy in creating digital artwork. They liked the results, and were excited by the possibility of turning some illustrations into future animations!”
DIGITAL MUSIC & RECORDING STUDIO PROJECTS

One of the most enticing spaces at the REACH Ashland Youth Center is the Digital Media Center’s Performance Recording Studios, where REACH Members can record raps, songs, musical performances, spoken word, and poetry. Teaching artists worked with a Recording Engineer Intern – provided by our REACH Career partner, Soulciety – to teach about the recording process, configuration of equipment, and facilitated several recording sessions. Students attended several required Digital Music classes around beatmaking, basic song construction, appropriate content development, and then made their plans to record lyrics to their songs. The recorded songs are being made into a compilation of REACH artist singles to be released in early 2014 on limited CD, also available on the REACH Arts & Creativity SoundCloud profile.

“I never noticed before that making music was so great.”
- Youth Participant - Age 16

“One thing that is unique about my work is that it shows my mood.”
- Youth Participant - Age 12

“The most memorable part of the class was sharing our music.”
- Youth Participant - Age 17

Teaching artist reflection:
“The recording studio projects are so exciting to the young artists, as well as everyone who sees them shine in the controlled spotlight of this creative environment. It’s inspiring to watch a young person share their passion for singing, poetry, rapping, or music, and then be supported by the staff, interns, and other youth who work to make their voices a reflection of their community.”

“I feel really great by learning new things from Digital Arts.”
- Youth Participant - Age 16
DÍAS DE LOS MUERTOS ART ACTIVITIES

For four weeks during the month of October, we held workshops at REACH to create artwork in honor of días de los muertos. Each Monday, we held two classes in the Works. A group of ten peer educators from San Lorenzo High who were interning with Fuente participated in these classes as well as other REACH members who were interested in learning more about days of the dead. The peer educators would then teach the same lesson during lunch hour at San Lorenzo High on Wednesdays as well as here at REACH on Fridays in the spot with the help of Arts Commission staff. The goal of these projects was to celebrate our ancestors and to create a memorial for the departed. The art projects included a tree of life sculpture, mini ofrendas, tissue paper flowers, papel picado and metal frames. All of the artwork created in this series of workshops went onto the first REACH días de los muertos altar which was on display during the celebration that took place on Monday, November 4, 2013. This event was a community celebration that included food, drink, dance, poetry and art.

"I liked making an art project about my grandpa. It was fun because I got to think about why I loved him so much. I’m going to give my project to my mom."  
-youth participant

"At first the papel picado was hard, but after I made two or three, it got easier."  
-youth participant

"I was surprised to see someone I knew in one of the metal frames, but it just goes to show what a small world it is."  
-youth participant

"My favorite part was making all the tissue paper flowers and cutting out papel picado because they were easy and fun to make and your family and friends get to see them."  
-youth participant

Teaching Artist Reflection

"The most beautiful thing that I saw happen during the course of these workshops was the deepening of relationships between all of the different people involved. I learned so much about the young people that I work with and I felt a shift in energy amongst everyone who participated to being more trusting and close with one another. Being involved in this celebration was a very magical experience for me"
Stencil Self-Portraits

Students learned a combination of digital and traditional art-making techniques by making stencils from high-contrast self-portrait photos. These stencils were then applied to a series of canvas paintings made by students using a variety of gradient, masking, and repeated image-making techniques. Youth participants got to take a self-portrait home, and also contributed one to the REACH collection!

“ONE THING THAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT MY WORK IS THAT IT IS GETTING BETTER EVERY WEEK.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“WHEN I LOOK AT MY PAINTING, I FEEL HAPPY BECAUSE I FINISHED SOMETHING I’VE BEEN WORKING ON FOR A LONG TIME.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Teaching artist reflection:

“While this project takes a long time to complete, the resulting artworks are fantastic, vibrant self-portraits that reveals one-self in a graphic and powerful light. Students endured the lengthy process of taking digital art into the traditional arts to make a very satisfying completed artwork. Students saw the strengths of repeated-image making tools, like stencils, as ways to show themselves in different lights. Along the way, they gained the knowledge, skills, and confidence, to turn their artistic vision into reality.”

“WHEN I FIRST STARTED IN THE MEDIA CENTER, I HAD NO IDEA HOW TO USE THE COMPUTER, AND NOW I KNOW HOW TO TAKE PICTURES AND MAKE IT INTO REALLY COOL ART.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT
PAINT THE FUTURE
Murals By Youth Artists At REACH Ashland Youth Center
An Art Program Of The Alameda County Arts Commission

Mural Concepts & Process
Youth members of the REACH Arts Collective, a special class comprised of artistically inclined members of the REACH Ashland Youth Center, were charged with creating two banner murals around the themes of technological innovation, robotics, and a vision for their future. These young artists spent several sessions brainstorming, designing, then compositing the variety of images into a pair of coherent mural designs. The banners were painted over the subsequent weeks by the Arts Collective members and other young artists.

Themes that emerged as part of the design process were a balance between technological novelty and function, and our relationship to and impact on the natural world. The idea of ethics around robotics also emerged, as Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics are a centerpiece of one of the murals. These murals are now on public display at the site of their sponsor, Bayfair Center, as part of the new East Bay Maker Labs, a tech-tools display for do-it-yourselfers, that includes 3-D scanners, laser cutters, robotics and 3-D printers.

Many Thanks to Deborah Gallegos, and Samantha Lillard of Madison Marquette Retail Services for this mural sponsorship, and providing exhibition opportunities for the youth of the REACH Ashland Youth Center.

Teaching artist reflection:
“Our class was asked to create a pair of banners to accompany an event around innovation, and the students were asked to envision the future of technology. They collaborated imaginatively, tried new painting and compositing techniques, and generally had a great time working together. They expressed their pride in their accomplishments and that they had stretched beyond their previously known abilities.”

“What helped me stay focused on this project was my love for art, and meeting and learning new things about the art and the people.”
- Youth Participant - Age 17

“The most memorable part of this class was putting my passion into a different form.”
- Youth Participant - Age 15

“The most important thing I learned was how to work with others and take critiques.”
- Youth Participant - Age 16
Ceramic Sculpture

Every Wednesday, students participated in hour and a half ceramic workshops. The goal of these classes was to introduce students to some basic hand construction techniques, glaze applications, and kiln firing processes as they create a variety of ceramic artworks. Projects included animal masks, coil pots, ceramic fruit, sentence tiles and pinch pots.

“I feel that I did something very creative. I can’t believe I made something so beautiful. It looks like I bought it in a store.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I love doing ceramics because it is a new kind of art to me. It’s something I’ve never done before.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I think art is important because everything I dream of I can make.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I learned how to mold different shapes with my hands. Working with clay isn’t as easy as it looks and it’s a lot of fun once you get good at it.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I showed my creative side when working on my ceramics by putting all my feelings into the artwork.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

“I love doing ceramics because it is a new kind of art to me. It’s something I’ve never done before.”

-YOUTH PARTICIPANT

Teaching Artist Reflection

“Our ceramics class at REACH continues to be very popular. This time around, I really saw students have a breakthrough in their spatial reasoning and how they approach creating their ceramic sculptures. It was satisfying for me to see young people accomplish the goal of envisioning an idea and actually having the skill and dexterity to carry it out. It touches me to see how special the artworks are to the youth. One student didn’t want to wrap his project up in newsprint to protect it because he wanted to hug it while he walked home.”
Plaster Masks

In February 2014, REACH students created plaster gauze masks which they painted and decorated. The goals of this project were to introduce the idea of mask making and its various uses, looking at different examples throughout the world. Students were challenged to envision, design and create their own unique mask.

“The most important thing I learned in this class is how to be myself.”
- Youth Participant

“I learned how to use hot glue, how to paint, and how to follow my vision and not think about what other people would want me to do. I just do my own vision.”
- Youth Participant

“The most memorable part of this class was taking my mask home.”
- Youth Participant

“One thing that is unique about my artwork is that it looks African and represents being wild and free.”
- Youth Participant

“I think art is important because it’s the one thing you can do to express yourself without people judging you.”
- Youth Participant

Teaching Artist Reflection

“This project was fun because it was totally different than other projects that we’ve done in the past. I enjoyed seeing each students individual personalities shine through in their artwork. It seemed like the students enjoyed every step of the process of making their masks - coming up with a design, applying the plaster gauze to their face, painting it and adding the embellishments and decorations.”
Oakland Museum Field Trip
In February 2014, the Arts and Creativity Program at REACH Ashland Youth Center took a group of seven art students to the Oakland Museum of California. Activities included visiting the galleries, drawing on a community art wall, attending a mural dedication, and eating at the special Friday night food trucks. Students were also given free passes to return to the museum.

I learned that art comes in all shapes and sizes.
—Youth Participant

“Seeing all of the incredible art makes me want to learn more and develop my skills so that I can keep improving.”
—Youth Participant

“My favorite part of the field trip was when we got to interact with the artwork.”
—Youth Participant

“I saw a painting that was very detailed but when you look even closer, it was way more detailed than I thought at first.”
—Youth Participant

“I liked how there was all different types of art, I saw things that I didn’t even know existed.”
—Youth Participant

Teaching Artist Reflection
“The field trip to the Oakland Museum was such a special and memorable day. It felt like we got to know the students on a whole new level. It was refreshing to get out of our normal environment and get to explore an exciting new space.”