

Artistic and Educational Merit

We propose a free after-school course, occurring once a week for 12 weeks, for 1st and 2nd grade students at Lapham Elementary School during spring semester of 2017. Grant funding and the after school timing for this course will allow for arts explorations that go far beyond what is feasible within class-time school-day constraints. Subsequent installations will promote a school-community connection during summer break.

Facilitated by local artist and arts educator Amy Mietzel, students in the course will learn about public art by considering famous examples, like the Eiffel Tower, and examples found near the school, like the works of Sid Boyum, Dr. Evermore, and Lynn Lee. Over 12 weeks, students will be encouraged to think creatively and collaboratively to design and build an art installation of their own. Additional local artists will visit with the class to talk about techniques and how to tackle design challenges. The students' sketches and ideas will be displayed at Bare Knuckles Arts during the spring Gallery Night, along with a description of the project. The finished sculptural pieces will be displayed at the annual Tenney Lapham Neighborhood Association block party, called the Party in the Park, at Reynolds Park in late June. They will then be installed in the Yahara Parkway through the summer (2017). This is a follow up to 'Reflections from the Banks of the Yahara River,' an installation of site-specific artworks by five local artists in the summer of 2014 and funded in part with a MAC BLINK! grant. Both projects are coordinated by Jessica Becker.

Amy Mietzel is a mixed-media artist who has degrees in art and education. In addition to exhibiting her own work, she opened an independent art center on Madison's east side in 2014. Amy teaches visual arts classes, after-school art clubs, summer camps, weekend workshops, and art parties for children, as well as adults. She is highly qualified to take on the responsibility of designing, coordinating, and teaching this ambitious course. Amy is known for the way she makes space for her students to explore their own ideas and find creative ways to express them. As a mixed-media artist, she is most inspired by how ideas often come together in new and sometimes surprising ways. Amy expertly relates with children, draws out creativity, and encourages confidence.

Feasibility

A syllabus-like overview is attached to show how the goals of this course are broken down into realistically doable chunks for 1st and 2nd grade children. The fourth week is a walking field trip to see public art, including the murals by Lynn Lee (in Lapham School) and the Dreamkeeper birds by Dr. Evermore (on Paterson Street, 4 blocks from Lapham school). Weeks five, six, and seven include visits with local artists, all of whom live and work near the school: e.g. Rachel Bruya (sculptor, committed), Lynn Lee (painter, committed) and Chris Murphy (mixed media installation artist, committed). We have also budgeted for another artist visit to be planned based on the interests of the students. The artists will share stories about their own experiences and will then take part in that day's hands-on work.

Sketches of sample finished sculptures are attached. The basic design plan is simple: Provide stable and safe, but moveable, bases with poles on which to build with wire mesh. The wire mesh can be stuffed, decorated, and shaped to be anything, and the bases and poles can be combined. This gives the project a framework from which to begin, but allows the children creative freedom and gives the visiting artists creative influence.

Principal Tammy Thompson Kapp of Lapham Elementary School is supportive of this project and would offer classroom space in the school, as is done for afterschool clubs typically facilitated by parents. The PTG will also provide a cash contribution, snack, and help to recruit 2 parent volunteers for each week and snack. An announcement about this course offering would be sent to parents in the customary way: a photo-copied flyer

sent home on Fridays in kids' backpacks. The Parent-Teacher Group (PTG) will manage this process and registration.

Lapham Elementary School draws students from two neighborhoods: 1. Tenney Lapham and 2. Marquette. In order to spread the news about this great project, we would write articles about it for neighborhood newsletters and blogs (e.g., willystreetblog.com and betweentwolakes.com). The Gallery Night exhibition of student work at Bare Knuckles Art, alongside Amy's artist statement explaining the project, would bring attention from the larger Madison arts community. Additionally, when the finished sculptures are temporarily installed in Reynolds Park, and then in the Yahara Parkway, we expect larger city news outlets will take interest. Jessica Becker will handle communications about the project.

Importance

Lapham Elementary School has a student body of about 250 pre-k, kindergarten, 1st and 2nd graders. The school serves the city's downtown and near east side neighborhoods, which include families with a broad range of incomes. Lapham has around 20-25 students each year who are part of the Transitional Education Program (TEP), an MMSD program that provides services for homeless families with school-aged children (see: <https://govprograms.madison.k12.wi.us/TEP>). Notably, the neighborhood age profile is changing dramatically. In the 1980s the school was nearly shut down for lack of enrollment. Now, with new residential construction throughout the Capitol, Marquette, and Tenney-Lapham neighborhoods, the school is more than ever an important node in the community. Because it is an urban school in an area undergoing major change, there are wonderful opportunities for the school to shine. A unique pilot program such as this one would be a point of pride, as well as a way for people who don't have kids in school to connect with the school community. This proposed art course is deliberately place-based. In this class, Amy will be teaching using local culture as the touchpoint. The students will gain not only art appreciation, but civic skills and local knowledge.

The proposed course, offered for Madison public school children, directly supports the goals of Any Given Child. This course would:

ENGAGE students with extended opportunities for arts exploration that are not feasible within the school day.

DEVELOP students' essential skills including group work, creative thinking, tool use, communication, and more.

PREPARE students for involvement in their community by meeting artists from their community, visiting art installations in the community. Students will authentically participate and contribute to the community through the summer installations.

Access

The proposed free after school course would be offered for 1st and 2nd grade students at Lapham elementary school. The program would occur immediately after school, once a week for 12 weeks. All students, including those who attend the after-school care, run by Red Caboose, would be eligible to attend. Registration would be on a first-come-first-serve basis, with a maximum of 20 students, and managed by the PTG, as usual, with one exception: Because we are committed to accessibility, we reserve the right to extend up to three 'special invitations' to students whose parents may not otherwise sign them up for clubs, for whatever reason. We will work with the Lapham art teacher, Ms. Kimberly Wilson, for advice about students who may be particularly enthusiastic about the creative/art experience and might therefore really appreciate a special invitation to join this course.

Attachment 1

Teaching Timeline:

Week 1 Introductions, powerpoint slideshow presentation about famous public art around the world (such as Anish Kapoor, Maya Lin, Easter Island Heads, Claes Oldenberg, Niki St. Phalle, Christo and Jean Claude, el anatsui, Ai Wei Wei, Yayoi Kasuma, etc.), self-inventory activity (questions to prompt creative thinking and drawing), initial overview discussion about the project and end goal (to build sculpture).

Week 2 Review, powerpoint slideshow presentation about local art in Madison (works by Sid Boyem, Erika Koivunen, Dr. Evermore, Donald Lipski, Susan Walsh, Lynn Lee, Little Free Galleries, etc.), idea generation, planning, discussion, drawing.

Week Day 3 Review, imagining, drawing small and drawing large, talk about tools, materials, and safety, create a small model simple model of their idea.

Week 4 Walking field trip to see Lynn Lee's murals, Dr. Evermore's Dreamkeepers, and Reynolds Park.

Week 5 Review, gathering and introduction of materials and tools, visiting local artist or artists, begin building, discussion about things they saw and how it might help them.

Week 6 Review, visiting local artist or artists, tools and techniques, building sculpture.

Week 7 Review, visiting local artist or artists, building sculpture.

Week 8 Review, build sculpture, reflection on their process so far.

Week 9 Review, build sculpture.

Week 10 Review, build sculpture, reflection.

Week 11 Review, finishing touches to sculpture.

Week 12 Review, finish building sculpture, photograph artists and their work, survey or reflection about the program and their experience, make invitations for families and friends to see the sculptures in Reynolds Park.

Attachment 2

Artist statement and sketches by Amy Mietzel

Although the vision sketches use animals as a representation, students may choose other subject matters to develop. Using an inventory of questions, as well as the information about everything they see and learn, students are free to come up with an image they are inspired to create. From initial conceptualization through design and building, the course provides the opportunity for these young people to do some major planning and problem solving to make it work. The final result will give the young artists real pride of ownership of their community space. Tools, gloves, and safety glasses (if needed) will be provided by Amy Mietzel from Bare Knuckle Arts.

