

Spotlight on teaching artists

In this issue we feature two talented DAT staffers

PHILEMONA WILLIAMSON

The students in Philemona Williamson's classes are learning at the hands of an accomplished artist whose own canvasses explore the complexities of youth.

"My paintings deal with the most vulnerable time in life: adolescence," Williamson said. "The students I am working with are exactly in that moment in their life journey."

Williamson's contribution and dedication to Doing Art Together spans the organization's 35-year history.

Likewise, her teaching philosophy is



NINA RUBIN

a reflection of Doing Art Together's own mission. "To create a place that is nonjudgmental, supportive and that sparks curiosity about the visual world," Williamson said. Doing Art Together, she added, shows students "the joy in the pro-

cess of exploration. I truly think it opens up another part of their being where possibilities are presented."

Born and raised in New York City, Philemona Williamson discovered

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ARTURO GARCIA

When Doing Art Together hired Arturo Garcia, it was looking for a working artist to give students a different perspective on the creative process.

For Garcia, who was born in Mexico and has traveled extensively, it was an opportunity to connect with young people, sharing his artistic journey and the joy that art has brought him. The partnership between painter and organization has been an incredible success. Garcia recently discussed his own artistic style and influence.

Where did you grow up and when did you come to the U.S.?

AG: I was born in Mexico, and when I was 6 years old my family

moved to Spain. After 10 years, we returned to live in Mexico. In 2000, I decided to come to the United States to continue my studies of art.

What brought you to Doing Art Together?

AG: In 2010, Doing Art Together was looking for an artist who wanted to teach young students. The director in turn told me that she saw my website [arturogarciapainter.com] and was impressed. She read my bio and thought that I could be a good addition to DAT, since I also speak Spanish.

What do you like about DAT's mission and the way it focuses on process over product?

AG: The philosophy of working on

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- \$150 donation pays for 1 workshop for a total of 30 children and parents;
- \$300 donation pays for 6 scholarships to a 15-session Teacher Professional Development;
- \$600 donation pays for 4 workshops for a total 120 children and parents.

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CHIP GYNN

GARCIA from previous page process over product gives all students the opportunity to work free and without distinction of talents. And where each student has the same opportunities to grow, to solve problems and use their creativity.

Why is an organization like DAT important to the development of kids?

AG: DAT does a great job educating our children, bringing them closer

to art without distinction of race, or language. It makes the students solve problems using their creativity and lets them make their own decisions to awaken the creativity they will use for their own careers. Through art, the child reaffirms his knowledge of all his subjects.

What type of art do you create, and who are some of your influences?

AG: I am a classic realism painter

and my specialization is 19th century French Academy. But I greatly admire modern painters such as Cezanne, Picasso, Kandinsky, Van Gogh to mention a few.

How has your art been influenced by your experiences with DAT?

AG: Every day I work alone in my studio producing my own art. Working with DAT gives me the opportunity to leave my studio and inspire my students, taking my experience and making them feel like real artists. And they give me the opportunity to know myself more as an artist.

How do you feel about the future of DAT?

AG: I think that DAT has a great future with many challenges ahead. Everyone who contributes is very important to achieve the final task, which is the education of our children. DAT's credibility is the product of many years of success, and I am sure there will be many more years to come.

WILLIAMSON from previous page art, much like the students she now teaches, at an uncertain "time in my life, and it was a lifeline for me."

But finding that ability to express herself led Williamson to an artistic career that has flourished.

She has had numerous group and solo exhibitions in the U.S. and abroad, including solo shows at the June Kelly Gallery in SoHo — where another is planned for the fall — and a recent exhibition of her work at the University of North Carolina.

The joy and energy she experiences

as an artist is what Williamson carries into the classroom in her role as Doing Art Together instructor. "Making a piece of paper bend and wrap around itself, or fold, mixing colors to get a pink or brown. All these simple things are new and help to build ones confidence."

Among the students Williamson teaches are those at ReStart Academy. A New York City-run program, ReStart provides educational services for 13- to 21-year-olds in the juvenile justice system, drug treatment programs, transitional housing and other temporary settings.

Their own experiences can also serve as a catalyst for creativity.

"Students are introduced to seeing, and once you really see, the world becomes a vibrant place," Williamson said. Once they are given the basics, children "will always know they can do this art-making anytime they want."

DAT Program Update School Year 2016-2017

Number of hands-on program hours: 1,856

Number of students participating in DAT programs: 2,954

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