

Newsletter

Fall/Winter 2023



AUGUST MARTIN High School students in Queens worked with Doing Art Together in the spring to create this stirring mural, located in the computer lab classroom. (Photos by Julia Bulakh)

DAT mural project at Queens school soars

Doing Art Together's sensational mural projects have become an integral part of the organization's ability to connect with its public school students, to educate and illuminate.

That continued in June 2023 with a captivating example by students at August Martin High School in Jamaica, Queens.

Working with DAT teaching artist Julia Bulakh, the students created a large mural in a computer lab classroom. Student Jovan Pollack conceived of and designed the work, but the execution was a team effort — school staff included, said Department of Education District 79 assistant principal Karen Brown. Career and technical education teacher Will Dulin added creative direction.

The piece began with a detailed sketch on paper, then an outline on the wall

followed by the painting project, a challenge made more difficult because the mural's surface is on a set of student lockers.

The piece required time, patience and attention to detail. The finished project is dazzling.

At the center, sun rays shine outward over a mountaintop, at whose peak stands the silhouette of a person, arms raised in triumph. The mural is framed on one side by a portrait of a man's face as he stares at the scene, and on the other, by two arms, one black and the other white, interlocked in solidarity. Written in the middle of the mural is the phrase: "I'm going to show you how great I am." The rousing words fit with the school slogan: "Where dreams take flight," which recognizes namesake August Martin, the nation's first African American commercial airline pilot.

DAT Fall/Winter 2023 Essential Facts:

Number of hands-on art program hours: 1,800

Number of students including parents participating in DAT programs: 1,500

Number of school/youth programs DAT serves: 22

Number of years DAT has provided hands-on workshops in NYC: 41

To Donate, see back-page

Former DAT teaching artists recall program's impact and influence

For over 40 years, Doing Art Together has enriched and transformed the lives of children, but those young people aren't the only ones who have benefited from the experience.

DAT teaching artists, who inspire and spark creativity in students, have had their own spirits lifted. After moving on to new challenges, they still carry the organization's mission to use art as a window to self-expression and problem-solving, and as a tool to boost self-confidence.

For those artist educators, their time with Doing Art Together — in the classroom and in workshops at cultural institutions like the Metropolitan Museum of Art — made a lasting impression.

We asked three distinguished and talented teaching artist alumni, who now live in different parts of the world, to share their memories of DAT and what the organization means to them.

Here are their thoughts, lightly edited.

Luiz Guilherme de Barros Falcao Vergara

(DAT teaching artist, 1992-1995)

"Gratitude is the very first word that comes to mind when I remember Doing Art Together. I revisit those memories of infinite learning experiences with [DAT co-founders] Muriel Silberstein and Electra Askitopoulos-Friedman as a turning point

in my understanding of what being an experimental artist, educator, and curator means. The workshops of Doing Art Together and I believe for all who participated — artists, edu-

tors, parents, and children — were above all an event of re-enchantment of existence through art. From those years, I learned the meaning of joy. All of this I took with me back to Brazil, from my time as an artist and educator with DAT.



Ohad Shaaltiel

(DAT teaching artist, 1990-1995)

During my time teaching art in the DAT program, public schools in New York City had no art classes at all. Students were yearning for art.

My first project was working as a team with William Walsh, a painter and muralist. I joined him to plan art murals for elementary schools. The idea to share working as artists was amazing and



Teaching artist Ohad Shaaltiel, above, works with a student.

suitable perfectly for the students and for us. Each one of us brought our ideas under the guidance of our creative director, Electra.

The emphasis was on the process, keeping in mind the wonderful product at the end. We always ended the projects with an exhibition. All students, school staff and parents, participated in viewing the exhibition and listened to the students express themselves on what they did.

We, the Doing Art Together professional staff, conducted many wonderful art projects all over the five boroughs.

It was always magical to see the open eyes of the children, listening quietly with passionate faces. I'm glad I had the privilege to follow this program and contribute to communities of students in NYC's schools through the art experience.

I am grateful to the Doing Art Together program, to Electra Askitopoulos-Friedman, and to Muriel Silberstein-Storfer. It was a learning life experience for me.

Today as an artist and pedagogic director of the Joseph and Rebecca Meyerhoff Art Education Center at Tel Aviv Museum of Art in Tel Aviv, Israel, I am sharing my knowledge with all my students and colleagues.

William Walsh

I trained with DAT as an artist and teacher for about 25 years, under the

leadership of Muriel and Electra, two very passionate art educators and philanthropists whose mission was to make art

accessible to the communities that didn't have resources.

My parent and child workshops brought me to all five boroughs of New York City, exposing diverse communities to creative problem-solving and structure through mural painting, and to the DAT philosophy and methodology.

Muriel and Electra also supported making the Metropolitan Museum of Art accessible to all. In my humble way, I still try to carry on their lessons here in Tainan City, Taiwan, where I have been blessed since 2003 to carry on their approach to making art.

Thank you, too, to the many students and parents that have supported me throughout the years, and to the parents for letting me work with the most precious things you have.



AND A well-deserved award for DAT's Electra Askitopoulos-Friedman, and team!

Portraits of beauty: DAT students create with pencil, fabric, imagination

In spring 2023, Doing Art Together led numerous classes for students across New York City. Here is a selection of the fantastic work the children created. Top photo at far right and below it: Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School students in West Harlem with their self-portrait collages in classes taught by DAT's Arturo Garcia.

Top photo at near right and below it: Teens create pencil portraits in Crotona, the South Bronx, in classes taught by DAT's Tishawn Gonsalves.

Photo directly below and next to it: The final exhibition of paper and fabric collages by first-, second- and fourth-grade students at PS 20 John Bowne Elementary in Queens, in classes taught by DAT's Rute da Silva.



DAT draws a crowd at PS 125 community fair



Doing Art Together classes went al fresco with a table at the Ralph Bunche School PS 125 spring fair on June 3.

Students, adults and families worked with multicolored cut paper collage and pastels at DAT's table, which has become a popular attraction at the school's annual celebration of the season.

The day's theme was "Pride," and clear evidence of that was seen on the faces of those who participated in the DAT project and showed off their creations. DAT teaching artists Catherine Abrams, Julia Bulakh and Arturo Garcia were on hand to offer guidance along with DAT

co-founder Electra Askitopoulos-Friedman, as the organization continued its strong partnership with the West Harlem school. PS 125 teachers and administrators, including principal Yael Leopold, also took part in the day as did parents, children and young people from the surrounding neighborhood.

"The students and families loved the arts and crafts projects that you made possible," PS 125 Parents Association wrote in a letter to DAT following the event. "The day was a huge success and we could not do this without the support of dedicated partners."

DAT Programs • Fall/Winter 2023

BRONX

Bronx Envision Academy
Creston Academy Middle School
PS121

ReStart Adolescent Skills Center (ASC)
ReStart Promesa
ReStart Seton Residence

BROOKLYN

PS12
PS 145 NYC Edge
MANHATTAN

ReStart Euphrasian House
PS 36
PS 96

PS 96 After-school
PS 125
PS 161
PS 212

Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School
QUEENS

ReStart Outreach House
ReStart Adolescent Skills Center (ASC)
PS 2
PS 20
Jamaica Learning Center
Pathway to Graduation

Funding provided in part by Columbia Community Service • NEA • NYC Dept. of Cultural Affairs • NYSCA • NYC Dept. of Education • The Heller Family Foundation • West Harlem Development Corp.

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Programs include:

- Hands-on art workshops
- Parent/child classes
- After-school and weekend family festivals
- Art exhibitions for each site
- Staff development for teaching artists
- Visits to cultural institutions

Doing Art Together aims to transform lives by using art as a window to learning, self-expression, self-confidence, exploration, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Programs are aimed at often neglected audiences who rarely have the opportunity to benefit from art education's well documented enrichment.

Thank you to our editor, Alexi Friedman, and to Julia Bulakh for graphic design.

How to Donate

Your generous contributions help pay for and sustain a number of vital Doing Art Together programs.

Donations can be made directly through PayPal at our website:

doingarttogether.org/support/

Columbia Community Service funds DAT projects

For several years, Doing Art Together has been privileged to receive grants from Columbia University's Columbia Community Service, with the funding providing vital support that has helped sustain DAT's programming.

In 2023, DAT was honored to be among 55 nonprofit organizations in the Harlem and Morningside Heights areas to again win a CCS grant.

The award funds Doing Art Together STEAM projects (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) at PS 36 and PS 161, both in Harlem.

On July 10, DAT co-founder and creative director Electra Askitopoulos-Friedman represented Doing Art Together at Columbia Community Service's annual grantee reception, to discuss the critical work that local nonprofits perform and to

celebrate these essential programs. The organizations are all rooted in the community where they provide social services, support the arts, and help combat hunger.

The CCS event took place at The Forum, a community gathering space on West 125th Street and Broadway, part of Columbia University's Manhattanville campus.

The CCS awards help Doing Art Together as it partners with neighborhood schools to bring hands-on art workshops, parent-child activities, after-school programs and family festivals to the community. Working with classroom teachers, DAT students create meaningful projects such as multicolor collages, murals and portraits, which integrate with the ongoing academic subjects they are taught in the classroom.



Sadé Powell joins DAT with focus on development

In May, Doing Art Together welcomed Sadé Powell as its grant writer and administrative director.

Powell, who has extensive experience in nonprofit management, youth development and community organizing, will seek out new funding sources while managing existing DAT grants. As part of her responsibilities, she will oversee fundraising and communications and identify and develop working relationships with new school and community partners.

Powell was most recently a grant writer and communications contractor at Eastside Arts Alliance & Community Center in Oakland, California.

Before that, Powell was program

manager for Youth Leadership Institute in San Francisco; and advocacy program coordinator for Girls Inc. of Alameda County, also in Oakland.

She is also part of the editorial collective team at *Women & Performance*: a journal of feminist theory, in New York.

Powell has a master's degree in performance studies from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, and is a poet whose work has been supported by the Poetry Project, Stelo Arts and Kolaj magazine among others.

Powell said she looks forward to contributing to Doing Art Together's "growth and evolution as it continues to empower youth and families through education."