

I wrote these reflections on January 15th, 2012 after watching my students compete in the GA Art Throwdown. These reflections are raw and heart filled – not my best writing, but the passion is there so I don't want to edit.

The state's first art throwdown was yesterday - it was an exhilarating event and one that left me, again, wanting more! 4 schools were invited to put teams of students together to compete in visual art scrimmages, basically, that was it. Yet it was so much more! It was about our students leaning to work as a team and about how they used the art of the mark to share what they have learned in their art courses. It was about peeking into the art rooms of other master teachers and gleaning how they teach and why. It was about validating that our students really do listen and internalize the methods that we teach them. Students' marks were left everywhere as the 5 minute figure study competition had 50 teen artists at their easels or sprawled on the floor fervently drawing the model before them with a variety of media and dash of color and TIME! Everyone clapped and the energy grew! The entire group then moved onto the 20 minute figure study and again students, our children, put charcoal, graphite, Pen and ink to paper and the marks flew as students considered in split seconds of time the where's and the why's of the lines that became the shapes that became the forms of the figure before them - magic was happening in the atrium of the high museum yesterday morning - you could feel it! The coaches walked around with grins that couldn't mask their excitement and their joy in seeing that their students GOT IT! They were applying their art knowledge in the real world - this wasn't regurgitating knowledge on a bubble test - this was living the test! Leaving marks that became the images that solved the problems - and TIME! Another 20 minutes passed before our eyes as we tried to capture the vibe through our camera lenses - magical! I wanted to Find a way bottle up the vibe in the air - im not even sure how to describe it - glittery joy! Sparkles of happy! It was light and airy and kind - it was making the average visitor to the high that day stop, literally stop and watch and smile and want to know more - it was contagious - a contagious of good! It was glitter that was real - it was what shiny feels like - I thought of REMS song "shiny happy people holding hands" - it was REAL. Real LIVING. Powerful good happy shiny joyful contagious "smile from the heart" real living. I want more!

Our students then broke out into the 60 minute timed events. We had students in the collaborative sculpture room where they had an hour to create pieces that showed their interpretation of "dwelling" - so powerful and the work was intense! Students began to sketch ideas quickly on the papered table tops and others grabbed materials and began to experiment with shape and form and "see" the space become the dwelling - creative team work was at work and before our eyes, monuments arose, structures that made us each stop and explore and think about, we were being taught! In no time the time was closing in and students had to clean their spaces while writing the overall idea of their final sculptures near their piece. Peace. From creative collaborative chaos came a peace in the room ... and TIME!

While that was happening in one of the high museums education rooms, the 60 minute still life was happening in another. 30 students were gathered around a lovely, diverse, textural, colorful large still life of interesting objects, and as students were searching for the areas in which they would draw, the coaches were standing back and watching with admiration, gazing

upon the thinking that was happening before us. Before the marks were made, the ideas were forming and students, familiar and not, came together in the realization that they were all in this together. Music was brought in and BEGIN! The marks started off slowly, as students silently measured and considered their space and their composition and lines became shapes as objects quickly appeared and negative space filled with positive space! It was exciting to see the media begin to take over some of the students - graphite, charcoal, pen and ink, oil pastel, chalk pastels, watercolor, acrylic, there was no right, no wrong, there was only a high level of quick creative and divergent thinking as students drew with passion and nervousness - some eager, some tentative, some confident, some questioning, yet the clock ticked and marks continued to fill the large pieces of paper! No 2 were alike, peeking occurred and esteem rose - comparison is the thief of joy - yet in times like these it can also push us to perform and our students were performing and creating and taking all that we've taught them and putting it to the test! All those hours spent practicing are paying off - in this instance! Sketchbook assignments, contour line studies, 2d, 3d, still life work, art history, color theory, elements and principles - mark making! It was all coming together on a Saturday afternoon and TIME! Utensils Down!

And while these 2 events were taking place, 2 other exciting events were happening simultaneously as well - the long term 4d installation works were being built as well as the 60 minute figure studies back up in the atrium! Art students and their coaches were everywhere and marks - remarks - more marks were flying! Today was Good. In every possible way, it was good.

Good energy.

Good learning.

Good experience.

Good art.

Good collaborations.

Good for all.

Today art was made and created for and with purpose. We came together and showcased what the visual arts are really all about - thinking! Leaving our marks and continuing to learn - art learning is never ending and there is always room for improvement and we get it! We understand this, it's what fuels us! We push our students to work hard and through that they will be able to tell their stories and for each mark they make, they will become a part of art history - herstory - theirstory!

We wrote the first few pages of a new story today. The art throwdown must continue. I can't wait to see what the next chapter will look like but if it's anything like Saturday, January 14th, 2012, it's going to be a hard tale to put down.

Oh, and if you're wondering who "won" the scrimmages and the overall event - it really doesn't matter does it? Everyone won yesterday - absolutely everyone!

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