

Honors Students Teach Art History

Honors Students

JCCC student Michele Handy helps Kayla Peterson and Selma Baghdadi (seated) in a printmaking project.

If you don't know who the German Expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner is, ask the 20 students in Debra Johnson's fourth-grade class

at Prairie Star Elementary School, Leawood. After a 30-minute Masterpiece Moments with Dr. Allison Smith, assistant professor, art history, and two JCCC honors students, Adela Wood and Michele Handy, the fourth-graders eagerly spoke about the artist and tried their hand at printmaking, one of Kirchner's media.

"He is a German artist, he likes snow and the color red because it is expressive," said Gillian Frey, fourth-grade student.

"And he wasn't very photogenic," added Lauren Barash, another fourth-grader.

Handy and Wood will be solo presenters to first- and second-graders, respectively, at Prairie Star twice during the spring semester as part of their honors contract.

"When I started teaching at JCCC, I wanted to make art history more relevant to students' lives,"

Smith said. "And with this experience, honors students learn how to speak to and communicate with the general public, especially children, in a simple way, what an artist is trying to convey."

The fourth-graders are not shy about raising their hands and sharing their opinions about Kirchner's works. Presenters learn too.

"Kids see things in ways that adults don't," Smith said.

Making a print from a Styrofoam meat tray was a new experience for most of the fourth-graders. The ink was red, reinforcing the idea of Kirchner's favorite color as red.

"I never knew what a print was before," Barash said.

"Don't be discouraged if your print doesn't come out exactly the way you would like it to," said Smith, who has been in charge of Masterpiece Moments for the last five years. "Sometimes artists' mistakes can turn out to be their greatest projects."

"The students love it," said Johnson, when asked about the Masterpiece Moments program in her classroom. "We have a great arts program at Prairie Star, and having Allison and her students here certainly adds to it."

Wood, who is studying toward a degree in elementary education, says the honors project is a good opportunity to present in a classroom. She saw her children, who are both students at Prairie Star, become "connected to art" as a result of previous years' Masterpiece Moments.

Handy, also seeking an elementary education degree, says the honors project allows her to affirm her degree choice. 🌟



Dr. Allison Smith introduces fourth-graders to German Expressionist painter Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.