

# Getting Creative at the Nerman Museum

NMOCA



Ryan Conly smiles as he brightens his sculpture with color.

Teacher Cynthia Wood illuminates features of *Elephant*, a painting by Amy Sillman.



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**A**rea children study contemporary art and get inspired to create their own works when they take Contemporary Creations classes

at the Nerman Museum of Contemporary Art.

Contemporary Creations classes are an extension of the museum's tour program and are designed for 8- to 11-year-olds. The two-hour classes are evenly divided between art tours and studio time in the Tearney Education Center's children's studio. In the classroom, students draw from concepts they've learned and inspiration from works of art they viewed to create their own pieces.

"The children have a lot to say about the art right away. They like sharing ideas with each other and then taking those ideas and creating their own unique works of art," said Cynthia Wood, one of two Contemporary Creations instructors along with Amy Wunsch.

Wood, art teacher at Brougham Elementary School, Olathe, loves taking students all over JCCC's campus to view pieces of art.

"Being able to see the art in person, rather than looking at a reproduction, allows the students to really relate to the work. I don't see this many students getting so excited and engaged in the regular art classroom where we look at posters or pictures from the Internet," Wood said.

According to Wood, students have most enjoyed the ceramic projects. A favorite lesson involved learning about contemporary Native American art and then creating a clay vessel. Students worked with a quick-drying clay that

does not need to be fired in a kiln. Other projects have included 3-D paper sculptures, painting, working with pastels, and creating miniature monuments with foam board.

Karen Gerety Folk, curator of education for the Nerman, says the number of students turning out for the classes has been excellent. More than 70 students participated in classes during the month of June. Like Wood, she feels that seeing works of art in person gives students a totally different perspective on what it must have been like for the artist to create the work.

"Students actually see the size of the artwork and gain a sense of how the work was created. All kinds of questions come up that students might not otherwise ask. How did the artist create a painting so large? How big of a studio space did he or she need to make the piece?" Gerety Folk said.

Exploring questions like these helps the students learn to look at art in a more critical way.

"Our tours are focused on visual literacy, learning how to look at a work of art and pick out the artist's choices," said Gerety Folk.

Often times, students have so many ideas to express, they need little prompting from the teachers.

"There are instances when I just stand back and see where the students take the discussion. Then I can tailor my teaching to their interests and observations," Wood said.

Classes are designed so that students can try one class or come each week to learn something new. This flexibility, along with an affordable fee, allows students visiting from surrounding areas to participate.

Students can register through the Continuing Education division by calling 913-469-2323, or by downloading forms at [www.jccc.edu/youth](http://www.jccc.edu/youth). Fall classes will be held at 10 a.m.-noon and 2-4 p.m. on Saturdays beginning September. For more information about Contemporary Creations or other museum programming, contact Karen Gerety Folk, 913-469-8500, ext. 4771, or send e-mail to [kgerety@jccc.edu](mailto:kgerety@jccc.edu). 🌿

Story by Emily Serafin