

Q&A with Laurelin Kruse; founder of the Mobile Museum of American Artifacts

What inspired you to start MMoAA?

This project was inspired by my background working in archives and rare books libraries and my experience playing house shows around the country as a singer/songwriter. Both gave me a strange and often intense view into people's lives. As an archival assistant I'd go through cardboard boxes full of letters, newspaper clippings, address books and ticket stubs (and the occasional strand of human hair) with the goal of reconstructing entire lives out of those contents. Around that time I also began to tour around the country as a singer/songwriter, mostly playing shows in people's living rooms. I loved showing up somewhere just for a night or two and getting to know people in their homes. I've always had a strong interest in people's daily lives. The idea for MMoAA came to me while I was working my first job out of college in archives at an artist foundation. I started to think it was crazy that several people were employed full-time in dedication to this one man's work, ultimately to increase the commercial value of the art. I thought we should have a museum and archive dedicated to everyday people, things, lives and stories.

What is MMoAA? What's the concept, how does it work?

The Mobile Museum of American Artifacts is a traveling museum of everyday objects and their stories. An archeology of the present. A cabinet of curiosities of contemporary American life. Anyone can contribute an object of some personal significance to MMoAA's collection. The only requirement is that the personal artifact must have a story behind it. Most museums depend on people to come to them, but we're a museum that goes to the people and is shaped by our visitors. In New Haven we've set up in front of Union Station, the New Haven Museum, the Edgewood Park Cityseed Market and around downtown to reach communities around the city and invite them to share their objects and stories.



Ta'quann Brown attends Common Ground High School where his interest in the arts has lead him to opportunities such as SAP. He also enjoys playing soccer.



Winston Knight is a sophomore at Metro Business Academy. He likes photography and digital art, focusing on photo and video editing.



Melisa Palma is a junior at East Haven High School. She enjoys drawing and playing music.



Sharon Cheng is a sophomore at Hamden High School and ECA. She is a passionate artist and Kpop fan. She hopes that MMoAA will help bring people throughout the country together



D'Er Loving is a sophomore at Wilbur Cross and lives by her own artistic mantras, "An artist isn't just art, an artist makes of what they got."



Kevin Palma is a senior at Career High School. He is a musician and plays the saxophone.



Brianna Ferrino is a sophomore at Common Ground High School. She enjoys the visual arts, particularly painting and drawing. She also plays soccer and cheerleads.



Shawn Luzzi is a senior at Metro Business Academy. He is quite interested in digital and traditional arts and is always looking to improve his skills.



Grace Sawyer is a rising senior at Metro Business Academy and ECA, where she studies theatre. Grace enjoys many interdisciplinary arts, cult classics, and re-reading Harry Potter.



Asia McCain is a junior at Career High School and hopes to pursue a law and social justice career path. She is verbal artist who likes to speak words of wisdom as well as sing and write music.



Khalil McBride is a sophomore at Wilbur Cross High School. In his free time he likes to hone his creative writing skills and sketch.



Arazil Jackson is a student studying visual arts at Co-op High School. She is interested in fashion and photography and hopes to pursue those



Lorraine Vazquez is a sophomore at Career High School. She started her first year of softball last Spring and enjoys being active.

The Apprentices

What was the SAP Program like? How did the students respond, what sort of projects did they complete?

The program began by focusing on New Haven, history, and museums through field trips to the Yale University Art Gallery, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, the New Haven Museum, the Institute Library, and the Cushing Brain Collection. Together we explored new parts of the city and got a new perspective on its history. The students also spent several days going out into the community for two projects, Pockets of New Haven and Sound Files. For Pockets of New Haven, students asked people in the Ninth Square and at Union Station if they could photograph the contents of their pockets. This project offered a peek into the everyday things we all carry with us, the things we all have in common (many iPhones), and the things unique to our pockets (lucky coins, medicine, photographs). For the Sound Files project the apprentices captured places around New Haven through field recordings.

Why did you decide that Artspace's SAP Program was the right venue to launch MMoAA?

I knew I wanted to initiate this project in New Haven. It's the perfect small city with a wide range of communities and support for entrepreneurial efforts. Working with the students in the Summer Apprenticeship Program helped this community-based project reach even further in New Haven's neighborhoods. Most of these high school students have lived in New Haven their entire lives. They have an important perspective on the city and played an essential role as neighborhood ambassadors.

How does this program help foster a connection between the apprentices, the arts, and the City of New Haven?

Apprentices made a connection with the community each time they asked a New Havenite to share the contents of their pockets or an object and story of personal significance. They talked with people in New Haven businesses, parks, and on the street and listened to the stories that are often left untold. Their community outreach and participation served as the New Haven heartbeat of the project. The Mobile Museum of American Artifacts is all about the connections we make through the stories we tell, the things we share, and the places we inhabit together.



The Summer Apprenticeship Program has been made possible thanks to support from the City of New Haven Mayor's Community Arts Grant program.



Artspace is very grateful to also receive exhibition and operating support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the City of New Haven Office of Economic Development, the Connecticut Office of the Arts, the Greater New Haven Community Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Mabel Burchard Fisher Grant Foundation, the Grace Jones Richardson Charitable Trust, First Niagara Bank, and New Alliance Foundations, Yale University, local businesses and individual Friends of Artspace.

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The Summer Apprenticeship Program: A Brief History.

The Summer Apprenticeship Program is the centerpiece of Artspace's work with young people and offers a unique opportunity for a small group of New Haven public high school students to work intensely with a master artist for three weeks each summer. In 2001, the program's founding year, Artspace partnered with renowned Connecticut artist Sol LeWitt to create a series of wall drawings. The work, conceived by LeWitt and realized by the teen Summer Apprentices, was displayed at Artspace's gallery that summer. Since then, New Haven public school students have been given the opportunity to work on ambitious installations with such artists as David Pease (former Dean, Yale School of Art), Lee Boroson (faculty at RISD), and Jean Shin (who has been the subject of a solo show at the Smithsonian Museum in Washington DC). The program has twice been nominated for a President's Coming Up Taller Award (now known as the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award), CUT recognizes exemplary arts programs which foster young people's intellectual and creative development. Artspace honors the hard work of the students by offering them work stipends and ongoing support with college and job applications, while also enabling an esteemed "master" artist to adapt their teaching approach and methods to a younger



Coming Up at Artspace this Fall:

City-Wide Open Studios: Hundreds of artists across Greater New Haven swing open their doors during October weekends. Pick up the Official Map & Guide in the October 3 issue of the New Haven Register and also at Artspace, where each artist will also exhibit one representative work. More info at www.cwos.org.

October 2/3 Opening Receptions

October 10 Special ticketed benefit event: Keynote Lecture and Kick off evening with public art expert Tom Eccles

October 11/12 *Weekend I*, Installations and performances at The Goffe Street Armory, 290 Goffe St. New Haven

October 18/19 *Weekend II*, Studios in New Haven, Hamden and West Haven

October 25/26 *Weekend III* Studios at the Erector Square studio complex, in Fair Haven



MOBILE MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN ARTIFACTS

MMoAA

July 25 -
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