

NEW URBAN ARTS



NEW URBAN ARTS MID-YEAR MAKINGS: An exhibition of student works

Invitation to midyear student exhibition. Artwork by Olivia Reels, Freshman.

2014-2015 Year-End Program Report

New Urban Arts
705 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
t. (401) 751-4556
f. (401) 273-8499
www.newurbanarts.org

In 2014-15, New Urban Arts experienced a number of major transitions. Most notably, in December, **Executive Director** Elia Gurna moved to California. Director of Development Daniel Schleifer stepped in as interim executive director, and the board of directors named him as permanent Executive Director in April. In September, Owen Muir became **studio organizer**, replacing Rob Pecchia, who left for graduate school.

We also experienced the **highest levels of student enrollment and participation** in the history of New Urban Arts. However, thanks to systems and program changes established in 2011 in order to handle growth, New Urban Arts continues to be a safe place that fosters creativity. Looking ahead, we are continuing to develop strategies and systems to ensure that the ratio of students to artist-mentors in our core program, Youth Mentorship in the Arts, remains low in the face of growth. We are also examining our space needs and considering opportunities to expand programming into our lower level.

Our 2014-15 programming year ran from July 1, 2014-June 30, 2015, concurrent with fiscal year 2014-15. This period included the 2014 Summer Art Internships and the 2014-15 Youth Mentorship in the Arts program. This report describes participation in New Urban Arts' programs in quantitative and qualitative terms, along with recent changes in our program strategies. It is important for us to balance quantitative and qualitative analysis to capture the outcomes of our programs. Excerpts of student writing and reflection are woven into this report to illuminate what numbers are unable to. Below is the final artist statement one of our graduating seniors wrote at the end of her fourth year at New Urban Arts.

These are a collection of some of the work I've made over the years at NUA. I was so excited to get a whole wall, and I immediately felt that whatever I put up should represent the home that NUA has become for me over the past four years. I have never been to a place more welcoming and magical than NUA, and it has truly become a place I consider a safe haven, a sanctuary. Despite everything that happened while I went to school across the street, this studio has always been an unwavering force. I find still I am constantly in awe of NUA's ability to heal, to grow, and to illuminate. I know I will never come across a place of pure happiness and positive energy, and I am so incredibly grateful for everyone I've come across, and furthermore, so honored to have had the pleasure to exist in this space.

Youth Mentorship in the Arts

The Youth Mentorship in the Arts program is New Urban Arts' core program. This program takes place from October through May. The long-term goal of Youth Mentorship in the Arts is that our students make a permanent place for creativity and imagination in their lives. Our interim goals are that students:

- Develop close, positive relationships with non-parental adult mentors and peers.
- Acquire skills and knowledge in the arts.
- Begin to develop their unique artistic voice.
- Graduate high school on a path towards postsecondary success.

Program Activities

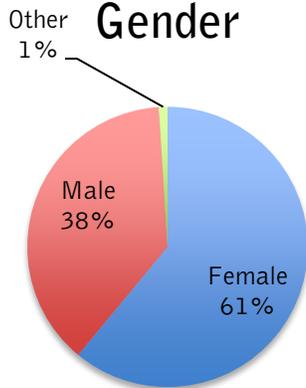
Artist-mentors were selected in the fall as volunteers serving four hours a week or about 110 mentoring hours a year, plus 30 hours of professional development and training in various elements of youth development, arts mentoring, and education. As always, our artist-mentors underwent a rigorous selection process, conducted by students, which included a written application, submission of artwork, and in-person interviews. We received 25 mentor applications for 10 open positions and had 11 returning mentors, for a total of 20 artist-mentors and 1 studio study buddy (tutor). Artist-mentors worked in a variety of media, including painting, drawing, digital media, video, printmaking, photography, sewing, music, multi-media, creative writing, and poetry.

As stated, this year we experienced record student enrollment and participation:

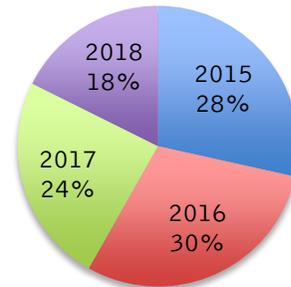
	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
<i>Total Registered Students</i>	516	379	333
<i>Students Attending, on average, Once or More per Week</i>	111	84	81
<i>Students Attending 30 or More Days over the Course of the Year</i>	125	99	81
<i>Average Daily Attendance</i>	66	44	28
<i>Average Monthly Attendance</i>	207	141	121

Demographics

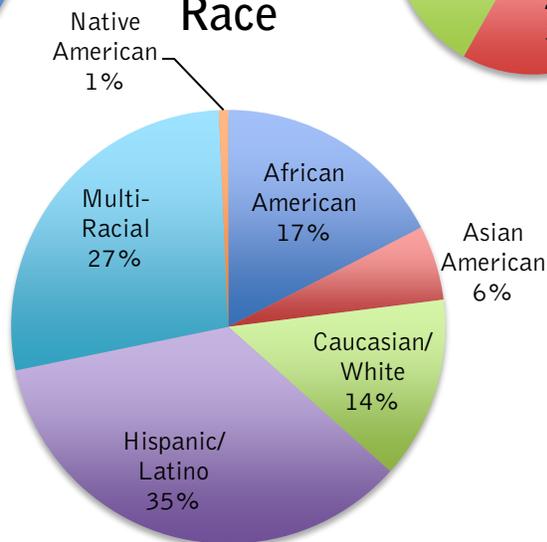
Gender



Graduation Year



Race



Demographics, continued

- 21% of our students identified as LGBTQQ
- 80% qualified for free or reduced-price lunch.
Free lunch is for students from households at or below 130% of the poverty line;
reduced-price lunch is for students from households between 130% and 185% of poverty. For a household of four with two children in Providence, 185% of poverty means subsisting on less than \$43,700 per year.

Year-End Survey Results

This year, New Urban Arts' program staff made an effort to get a higher number of students to participate in our year-end survey in order to have more statistically significant data. The survey is administered online through Survey Monkey. During the last week of programming, two studio computers were locked to visit only the Survey Monkey webpage. In addition, the survey was emailed to all students, and the survey was left open for students to complete for two weeks after programs ended. This year, 101 students completed the survey, a record number; in previous years, an average of 50 students have completed the survey.

The percentage of students agreeing or strongly agreeing with each statement was as follows:

	2014-15	2013-14	2012-13
<i>I am open to trying new things.</i>	97%	98%	94%
<i>I have developed more confidence.</i>	96%	90%	92%
<i>I have developed a way of creating that expresses who I am.</i>	94%	98%	94%
<i>I have built strong and trusting relationships with my peers and adults.</i>	91%	94%	97%
<i>I have improved as an artist.</i>	91%	96%	
<i>I have developed a better idea of what I want to do in the future.</i>	81%	94%	80%
<i>At New Urban Arts, I feel safe and supported.</i>	90%	100%	97%
<i>Overall I rate New Urban Arts' programs outstanding.</i>	84%	90%	75%

The following are open-ended responses to the question, "Do you like working with an Artist-mentor? Why?"

- *Yea, why not. Eva was extremely helpful and friendly. Plus the mentors made me feel more like a friend than a student.*
- *It kinda depends because when I know how to do something I don't really like having a shadow but it's great that they help me and teach me new things.*
- *Yes because they're people too, not just teachers.*
- *Yessssss, they drive me to try new things and push my art to new limits. The mentors give a blanket of security.*

The following are open-ended responses to the question, "What does New Urban Arts mean to you?"

- *New Urban Arts means to me that I'm free to do something positive with my friends after school. Knowing that NUA is here lets me know that I can always have a place where I can come and have someone to confide in.*
- *New Urban Arts is a safe place for me to express myself. I learn new things every day that I'm here. I appreciate every person in the space.*
- *Life is art and art is life.*
- *A place to escape from all problems, to hang out with friends and express myself through various forms of arts.*
- *New Urban Arts is a home/community to me. It's a place where I feel safe and awesome and inspired!*
- *A place where I can express my feelings in art and a program that makes students find a way into their future.*
- *It's an artistic place where you can express who you really are without being judged. You really can't find places like this anywhere else. It's artistic expression.*
- *New Urban Arts mean a peaceful place for teenagers or all kind can come after school and stay out of trouble and off the streets and staying positively productive.*
- *It means a place that is full of people who are different, but are all able to be together and understand each other.*
- *It feels like a huge chocolate cake with a whole lot of love as its filling. I love chocolate cake.*
- *New Urban Arts is a place for me to relax outside of school and extra-curricular. It helped me develop an interest in the arts that I would not have had if I did not come here.*
- *New Urban Arts is my second home. New Urban Arts is like my mom it has nurtured me from beginning till always. It's the place where I have found the explosive rainbow within me that I can now carry wherever I find myself in life.*
- *New Urban Arts to me is a place to build relationships with people I normally would not associate with.*
- *It's a place where high schoolers of different back grounds can come together & learn from each other.*

Student Writing

Beyond attendance, demographics, and survey results, the various writing assignments that youth participants complete serve as a vital assessment tool. By insisting that youth reflect on their practice, we understand the extent to which they are building knowledge in the arts, and we understand the value of the mentoring relationships that they are building with artists.

Below is a reflective writing that a student did after the Summer Untitlement Project.

I apply and I'm accepted for a competitive summer internship at New Urban Arts, in Providence. The experience is vertiginous without anybody to hold my hand. In the midst of my terror, my made-up world is sitting on the horizon; an inviting sanctuary. On my first day the panic reaches its peak. I think I am not good enough, that I am not creative enough, that my ideas will fall flat and I will be denounced as an artist forever. I throw out my ideas to the group, and my words surprise me. My imagination is useful in this world too. My distance from reality has refined my creativity, and for the first time I know I am good at something. At New Urban Arts, we discuss gender, sexuality, identity, and patriarchy. Many of our in-depth discussions become very personal. Coming to accept myself and my sexual identity is an issue that I've struggled with for years. The nonjudgmental discussions within this program are enlightening, and learning how to translate these issues into art and writing is life changing....

I no longer hold back my imagination. I had once treated it as a disadvantage, now I see it as a gift. My creativity is part of me, and inspiration comes with ease. Like my five year old self, I can play pretend to escape from my troubles, but now I am confident that my own comfort can't limit me. I am no longer the frightened five year old girl in a seventeen year old's body. I am a growing, changing person, transitioning into the adult that I want to be. The change is no longer immediate and intimidating; it is a gradual revelation, as I seek new opportunities for my creativity in the world.

Summer Studio

Over the course of five weeks during the summer of 2014, New Urban Arts engaged 37 students in our Summer Internship in the Arts program. The summer program is treated as a rigorous internship, and students were paid a stipend of \$400 upon successful completion of one of four programs. The *Art Inquiry* program enrolled 10 students who studied and responded creatively to the theme "In-Between"; The *Untitlement Project* consisted of 10 students studying issues of identity; the *Mural Team* worked with 11 students and produced two large murals; and *Corrugated Community* worked with 6 students in parks across Providence. New Urban Arts also offered an Open Studio four days a week for two hours each day.

Students began the program with a full day orientation reviewing positive workplace behavior and expectations. The program then met over five weeks. Students received free lunch every day through the Federal Summer Lunch Program coordinated by the City of Providence Department of Parks and Recreation, and we provided RIPTA bus passes to and from the program each day.

Art inquiry



Artist-mentors Aneudy Alba and Cara Adams led the art inquiry group as they delved deep into the theme "In-Between." Students explored ideas of transition, evolution, gender identity, human vs. machine, gateways, and portals. The Art Inquiry took field trips to the RISD Museum, the Roger Williams National History Museum and led a printmaking workshop with the Corrugated Community at Donigian Park.

Visiting artists included Meredith Stern, Eric Gould, Jorge Vargas, and Carlos Lopez from Inspiring Minds. Julia Gualtieri served as our Art Inquiry scholar-in-residence. Our annual art inquiry program resource guide, a resource for educators, is available online at bit.ly/InBetween2014

Mural team



At Classical High School, the mural team worked with Artist-mentor Chris Hampson to complete a large work based on the students' collaborative design. The painting celebrates creativity, dreams, and thinking outside the box. This project received additional support from Classical High School and the Classical High School Alumni Association.



In partnership with the Urban Pond Procession and with support from a PopUp Providence Grant, our mural team, led by artist-mentor Kedrin Frias, created a work at JT Owens Park and ball field on Niantic Avenue in the former West Elmwood neighborhood near Mashapaug Pond. Students heard former residents' stories, learned about the pollution of the pond and designed and painted a mural in honor of those stories. View the mural team in action at bit.ly/NUA-Mural2014

Corrugated Community



With a grant from Pop Up Providence, Artist-mentors Beth Nixon and Dailen Williams led students in creating cardboard structures and participatory art activities for people visiting Providence's public parks. In addition, visiting artists held workshops. See the Corrugated Community at: bit.ly/NUA-Corrugated

The Untitlement Project



Led by artist-mentors Mai Nguyen and Paul Tran, ten students explored issues of identity, including sexual orientation, gender, and gender expression. Visitors included Jorge Vargas, Ethan Kennedy and Kristen Pfeiffer from Youth Pride, Madeline Montgomery, and a number of couples who participated in our panel on healthy relationships. Special funding was provided by the Equity Action Fund at the Rhode Island Foundation.

Progress toward Summer Studio Youth Participant Objectives

To receive their \$400 stipend, youth participants must successfully complete both collaborative and independent art projects demonstrating their learning, meeting standards for success established by students, their artist mentors, the director of programs, and the youth programs manager. All 37 participants in 2014 met these requirements.

- Students must complete collaborative and independent art projects to demonstrate their learning. All 37 students met this objective. Their work was exhibited in a gallery show on October 10, 2014 for an audience of 174 people. View their artwork at: bit.ly/NUA-SummerArt-2014 View photos from the opening at: bit.ly/NUA-Oct-2014
- Students must write an artist statement to accompany their artwork or performance. All students met this objective; statements were displayed at the October show. Below is a collaborative piece by the Untitlement Project with an excerpt of their artist statement.



Just be Your Selfie

Transparencies, Sharpies, Paper

"What's your filter? How do you see me? How do I see myself? We traced the two dimensional versions of ourselves onto several variations of how we are seen/wish to be seen/see ourselves. Not one filter was ever the same as the next. Not one filter was meant for anyone else. Instagram isn't always as it seems. Neither are we."

- In teams, students must plan and facilitate at least one public workshop presentation with a community partner. All students met this objective.
- Students must fulfill attendance requirements. All students met this objective; the requirements were as follows:
 - Unexcused absences must be made up and verified by a staff member.
 - Students are allowed two excused absences.
 - Excused absences beyond the first two have to be made up and verified.

Additional Summer Activities



A group of New Urban Arts students and artist Elizabeth Maroney painted a van for the **Providence Children and Youth Cabinet**. This van traveled around Providence to get resident input on pressing issues in education to inform the 2014 Providence mayoral election. After the election, the bus returned to the Providence Public School Department to be used for Kindergarten intake assessments.



During the **Institute of Other Significant Pursuits**, Marcus Civin, New Urban Arts co-founder and Associate Dean in Graduate Studies, Curriculum and Assessment at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and Executive Director Elia Gurna co-facilitated a weekend of conversation about the role of New Urban Arts in the lives of former and current mentors, as well as the challenges, questions and triumphs we face as we continue to work as community artists.



We hosted our first **Alumni Open Studio**, organized by alumnus, former mentor, and former staff member Jesse Banks III.

New Student and Mentor Supports:

New Urban Arts' focus is the creative development of young people. However, we recognize

that we work with youth from under-resourced communities. To that end, we also provide after-school snacks, free bus passes, tutoring, and homework help. This year we introduced new ancillary services for students and re-imagined some existing supports.

Studio Advocate

In partnership with the Rhode Island College School of Social Work, New Urban Arts served as a field-placement for a first-year Master's in Social Work candidate from September through May. We call this position the studio advocate. Present for 16 hours per week, the studio advocate mentored students who needed extra social and emotional support and led group activities that promoted healthy conversations. The studio advocate also researched community resources available to high school students to help build New Urban Arts' mental health and social services resource library. Finally, he also provided backup to mentors and staff whose students were experiencing particularly challenging social and emotional problems. The first year of this program was a learning experience for New Urban Arts and our partners at RIC. We learned exactly the extent of support that a Social Work Intern can provide as well as how to best support them through their school year. The position was a valuable addition to the social supports we provide our students and mentors. In addition to providing support to our students, the Studio Advocate was a sounding board and listening partner for our mentors—especially for mentors who were having issues connecting with students.

A Life After School

The A Life After School (ALAS) mentor helps high school seniors develop their postsecondary plans. In an effort to engage more of our graduating seniors meaningfully in planning for the next phase of life, the ALAS mentor evolved this year from a volunteer position modeled on our artist-mentors into a part-time staff position. At the same time, we made changes to our relationship with college access program College Visions; in the past we paid College Visions a per-student fee to enroll some of our high school seniors. However, we found this cost-ineffective, and it didn't allow us to reach enough of our seniors. The ALAS mentor is now responsible for ensuring that all seniors, both college-bound and otherwise, have an appropriate plan for after graduation.

Thus, the ALAS mentor has taken over individual college advising from College Visions so that we can serve more students and provide advising services in the familiar environs of New Urban Arts. At the same time, we maintain a contract with College Visions to provide certain services, including group workshops for students and their families on the college process, essay-writing, and FAFSA. College Visions staff were also on-call to offer technical assistance to our ALAS mentor. In this manner, we hope to multiply the work of College Visions and allow more of our young people to benefit from it. With support from other program staff, the ALAS mentor also assembled resources for youth not planning to go to college. As part of this effort, the ALAS mentor continued the initiative, piloted in 2013-14, to work with community partners to present the "Not-College Fair," a showcase of post-graduation programs, such as AmeriCorps and YearUp. By bringing postsecondary support in-house, we increased the number of students served from 7 to 30. New Urban Arts invited 36 seniors to participate at its year-end Art Party and graduation Ceremony; all successfully completed high school, and at least 26 are headed to college.

Studio Assistants

For a number of years New Urban Arts has had informal studio assistant positions available for alumni students. These positions were stipended similarly to the artist-mentor position with the same four hour weekly commitment but did not receive training or support in the same way that artist-mentors did. This year we formalized this position and created two, 22 hour a week positions for alumni students to assist our youth programs manager and studio organizer positions. With more hours, studio assistants are now present to support our program staff five days per week; they receive professional development around arts education and youth development, and they participate in weekly program team meetings. Because studio assistant positions are reserved for recent alumni, they are uniquely positioned to help staff build relationships with students and influence studio culture.

Resident Artist-Mentors

At the conclusion of fiscal year 2013-14, we chose to end the Arts Mentoring Fellowship, using those funds to better manage the growth of our core programs. We created three resident artist-mentor positions. Like the two mentoring fellows, our resident artist-mentors supported mentor training. However, they did not have requirements around artistic production, so they were more present in the studio to instruct and build relationships with students. These positions came with an increase to eight mentoring hours (from four) and a weekly meeting.

With the increase in student attendance this year, these new student and mentor support positions, which committed more time and presence in the studio than traditional artist-mentors, were key to helping us manage and maintain a safe and healthy studio during a year in which attendance increased dramatically. As we continue to monitor attendance capacity and manage growth, we will keep a close eye on the impact of these positions.

Gallery Attendance and Exhibitions

In addition to our core youth programs, New Urban Arts presented 20 public events including art exhibitions, workshops, and a large community-led block party. During 2014-15, we had a total of 3,334 people attend our events. Notably, in October 2014, we co-hosted the first annual Rock the Block block party event with the Providence Public School Department. To facilitate this event, New Urban Arts helped to forge a partnership with PPSD and 30 community organizations. The Block Party was held in the courtyard between Central, Classical and PCTA high schools, across the street from New Urban Arts. We hosted over 10 planning sessions with other organizations to coordinate this large event that engaged over 1,600 people.

Studio Team Advisory Board (STAB)

This year we had an active Studio Team Advisory Board (STAB), which supported the organization during the Executive Director transition, participated in strategic planning, and offered input on conversations about renovating our basement level into program space. This group of students cultivates New Urban Arts as a youth-driven studio by advising the staff, representing the organization publicly, assisting in student recruitment and orientation, and organizing events. STAB participates in all

hiring decisions, including the selection of artist mentors. In 2013-14, STAB consisted largely of seniors, so this year, we had only three returning STAB students, making the 10-member board relatively new to leadership positions. STAB met twice a month from October through May. STAB held a mid-year retreat in February and a year-end retreat in June.

During the year-end retreat, STAB gave feedback on a draft strategic plan and helped to craft a studio agreement that will be included on the enrollment form for all students at New Urban Arts.

Conclusion

After a year of transition, in which attendance reached its highest level in the history of New Urban Arts, we are continuing to refine our practices in order to manage growth. In 2014-15, we made key staffing changes, finding ways to provide more services to students while allowing adults to play larger roles in the studio (ALAS Mentor, Studio Advocate, Studio Assistants, Resident Artist-mentors). In addition, implementing the growth management strategies developed since 2010 has worked to maintain the high quality of our programs.

Over the course of the year, there are many opportunities for students to reflect on their experience at New Urban Arts. One such opportunity comes when students are writing college essays. Below is an excerpt from a student's application to American University's Politics, Policy, and Law program. She captures best our hopes and dreams for all of our students and the role that New Urban Arts can play both in their immediate lives and in supporting their lifelong creative practice:

On Westminster Street there is a place where the walls are colored with the personalities of the different people who make up the space. There aren't any paintings of fruits or landscapes, but rather pieces composed of personal beliefs and intolerance of social stigmas. There are portraits of a young woman's face drawn in accordance with how society saw her, how her family saw her and how she saw herself all based on gender. Inside, a woman named Ashley introduces herself as the youth coordinator and eagerly introduces the place as New Urban Arts, a community that empowers young people as artists and leaders. NUA is a safe haven for me and other students. The youth, staff, and mentors who make up this community engage in such in-depth conversations that anyone wandering by would see equals speaking, not 'teachers' and 'students'. Here, we are introduced to topics and situations that encourage us to grow as people...

New Urban Arts displays a tremendous amount of empathy and support for all who enter, and after experiencing what is possible; I am dissatisfied with the lack of thoughtfulness and kindness outside of this place. Here I am content with not being content. It is a place where I learn about social issues and question myself and others consciously. Here I can actually improve myself as a person and an artist, not just as a grade. If it were not for NUA showing me that my ideas as an individual actually matter, then I wouldn't be fueled with the knowledge that I could make a change.

Appendix – Key Program Staff

Daniel Schleifer, Executive Director
BA, Ethnic Studies, Brown University

Daniel Schleifer was named Executive Director in April, 2015. Schleifer joined the New Urban Arts community in the fall of 2007 to pilot the Studio Study Buddy program, which combines academic tutoring with the structure and values of New Urban Arts' core program, Youth Mentorship in the Arts. As director of development, Schleifer fostered a 40% increase in individual giving to New Urban Arts' annual fund along with significant increases in grant funding. These funding increases have allowed the organization to adapt to growth in student enrollment. Other significant successes include spearheading New Urban Arts' first capital campaign, seeding an endowment, and paying off the mortgage on New Urban Arts' building. Daniel is also a founding member, Sousaphone player, and composer in the What Cheer? Brigade, an 18-member brass band. In 2011, he received the prestigious MacColl Johnson fellowship in music composition from the Rhode Island Foundation.

Emily Ustach, Director of Programs
BA, Art History, Salem College
MA, Teaching + Learning in Art & Design, RISD

Emily Ustach has extensive professional experience in program design, non-profit administration and art education, as well as a long history as a volunteer and part-time staffer at New Urban Arts. At the Learning Community Charter School in Central Falls, she developed and directed the Education Fellowship AmeriCorps program. She also worked as the Program Coordinator at Rhode Island Campus Compact, where she supported college students' civic and community engagement. Through her work with the Education Fellows and college students, she has built a practice of supporting emerging professionals as they take risks and explore future possibilities.

Ashley Paniagua, Youth Programs Manager
BA, Liberal Arts and Studio Art, Wheelock College, with certification in Community Based Human Services

As a student at New Urban Arts, Ashley Paniagua started a long tradition of New Urban Arts fashion shows. She graduated from Classical High School, and went on to study at the New School, University of Hawaii and Wheelock College. She remained actively involved with New Urban Arts as an alumna, volunteering for various events and working as staff during the 2009 Summer Youth Workforce Training Mural Program. Ashley brings nonprofit programming experience working with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and as a family services specialist.

Owen Muir, Studio Organizer
BFA, Digital Media, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

Owen Muir is a New Urban Arts Alumni and former mentor. Prior to joining New Urban Arts Owen has worked at other youth serving organizations, such as Everett Arts, and taught digital media and technical theatre with a private high school for two years. Owen has also worked in the fields of graphic communication and photography. Owen enjoys illustrating and curating his grandfather's old photos as well as his own.