New Urban Arts is an arts studio and gallery for high school students and artists in Providence, RI.

New Urban Arts’ free, year-round out-of-school programs promote sustained mentoring relationships between urban high school students and trained artist mentors who, together, engage in youth leadership, risk taking, collaboration, and self-directed learning.

We believe that all young people, no matter their place in society, should have the opportunity to become more creative and independent thinkers. As a nationally recognized community arts studio, our mission is to build a vital community that empowers young people as artists and leaders to develop a creative practice they can sustain throughout their lives.

Founded in 1997 by four college and 10 high school students, New Urban Arts has grown to receive local and national recognition for our innovative approach to arts education. Over the years, we’ve served over 2,500 high school students and 150 artists. In 2009, The President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities awarded us the Coming Up Taller Award, the nation’s highest honor for out-of-school arts programs. In 2011, we purchased and renovated our new home at 705 Westminster Street, only 100 feet from our previous home at 743 Westminster.

Find out more at www.newurbanarts.org

High school students can join us all year round. 516 students were part of our studio community this year. Come visit!
Letter from Executive Director

In 2007, I walked into New Urban Arts for the first time to be interviewed by a group of students. They were considering me for a position as New Urban Arts’ first ever studio study buddy. I quickly realized that I had stumbled upon something remarkably special. The young people asked me challenging questions about why I wanted to participate in their space and what I thought I could offer them. They also wanted to know how I would bring academics into an art space without changing the vibe.

At the time, I was working as a political organizer and policy researcher. However, it appeared that the world I was searching for through my work was actually waiting for me in a youth arts studio on Westminster Street. The students’ ownership of and investment in the space impressed me; here was a taste of the freer, more equitable world that I was trying to build. I knew that I had to spend as much time as I could here.

Eight years have passed, and I now spend a lot of time at New Urban Arts! So do our city’s young people. Last year, a record of 516 students enrolled in our core program, Youth Mentorship in the Arts. They spent over 20,000 hours in our studio. I feel grateful to our team and supporters for ensuring, in the face of this growth, that the studio is well-resourced, welcoming, and responsive to students’ needs.

We have a number of theories about what has driven this growth. There are fewer opportunities for arts education; the Providence Public Schools have less than half as many art teachers now as they did 10 years ago. Many of our students tell us that they haven’t had an art class since elementary school. We also wonder about the impacts of standardized testing on school culture. Do they stifle creativity and imagination in the classroom for both students and teachers? Are learning environments increasingly rigid?

Whatever the reason, more students than ever are seeking the creativity and freedom of New Urban Arts. We are now arguably Providence’s largest provider of free after-school arts programs for high school students. We’ve gotten to this point by remaining true to our core values, holding fast to an approach that puts youth at the center. New Urban Arts should give us all faith that values-driven organizations, built on utopic ideas, can thrive.

Indeed, these are the kind of ideas that must be taken seriously if our society is going to adapt gracefully to a rapidly changing world. In 1990, our city was 65% white. Today, Providence is a truly multiracial city, but our cultural institutions haven’t kept pace with demographic shifts. We could change this reality by opening avenues of cultural participation to youth of color from the city’s low-income areas, but these opportunities are on the decline in our public schools, so New Urban Arts must take on the work of expanding cultural access.

Consider this alumni reflection: “Before New Urban Arts… I had a typical routine that I did every day. Wake up, go to school, go back home and do homework and some chores. … My life was pretty much boring. I had never even ridden public transportation before. But then one day, a really good friend of mine took me to New Urban Arts. NUA gave me the opportunity to see Providence. It didn’t limit me just to New Urban Arts. When I made friendships with mentors, it kind of gave me a VIP pass to many activities they were doing outside of New Urban Arts. Like helping out with a project at the RISD Museum. Or going to the Athenaeum with the Summer Art Inquiry. These are places I had never been to before. Working with these mentors has really opened my eyes to see the artistic side of Providence.”

We offer youth a variety of formal and informal opportunities to experience the city’s arts scene. We help them overcome barriers and become part of the artistic audience. At the same time, we cultivate their artistic voices and give them an audience.

We’re also changing the way cultural gatekeepers view young people of color. As New Urban Arts’ community grows and becomes entrenched in the larger arts scene, it has made the community more inclusive. A great example of this is 186 Carpenter Street, a storefront community art space run by former New Urban Arts artist-mentor Jori Ketten. Last fall, some of our students visited 186 for a show of paintings by former Executive Director Elia Gurna and her daughter Resolie. Inspired to show their own work outside of New Urban Arts, the students approached Jori themselves about hosting a show of work by Couture 13, their fashion collective. The show went up in December.

This typifies what I hope will be New Urban Arts’ legacy: a growing community of artists from low-income backgrounds who are empowered to seek resources, access, and exposure from gatekeepers who increasingly understand the value of diversity and equity. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this community.

Love,

Dan

ANNUAL PUBLICATION 2015 · ISSUE No.10

New Urban Arts means to me that I’m free to do something positive with my friends afterschool. 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.

— Aja Burris, student

Visit us sometime!

We are located at 705 Westminster Street in the West End of Providence, Rhode Island. The best time to catch the studio vibe is weekdays from 3-7pm when students and artist mentors are here.

Visit our website at www.newurbanarts.org or call 401.751.4556 for more information.

(clockwise from top left) Koyeawon Mendee, student; Elizabeth Jweinat works on a summer mural project; Tamara Kaplan gives one of many hugs; artwork by Tierah Harrison; 1st Alumni Artosgiving.

Before New Urban Arts... I had a typical routine that I did every day. Wake up, go to school, go back home and do homework and some chores. ... My life was pretty much boring. I had never even ridden public transportation before. But then one day, a really good friend of mine took me to New Urban Arts. NUA gave me the opportunity to see Providence. It didn’t limit me just to New Urban Arts. When I made friendships with mentors, it kind of gave me a VIP pass to many activities they were doing outside of New Urban Arts. Like helping out with a project at the RISD Museum. Or going to the Athenaeum with the Summer Art Inquiry. These are places I had never been to before. Working with these mentors has really opened my eyes to see the artistic side of Providence.”

We offer youth a variety of formal and informal opportunities to experience the city’s arts scene. We help them overcome barriers and become part of the artistic audience. At the same time, we cultivate their artistic voices and give them an audience.

We’re also changing the way cultural gatekeepers view young people of color. As New Urban Arts’ community grows and becomes entrenched in the larger arts scene, it has made the community more inclusive. A great example of this is 186 Carpenter Street, a storefront community art space run by former New Urban Arts artist-mentor Jori Ketten. Last fall, some of our students visited 186 for a show of paintings by former Executive Director Elia Gurna and her daughter Resolie. Inspired to show their own work outside of New Urban Arts, the students approached Jori themselves about hosting a show of work by Couture 13, their fashion collective. The show went up in December.

This typifies what I hope will be New Urban Arts’ legacy: a growing community of artists from low-income backgrounds who are empowered to seek resources, access, and exposure from gatekeepers who increasingly understand the value of diversity and equity. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this community.

Love,

Dan

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this community.

Love,

Dan

New Urban Arts means to me that I’m free to do something positive with my friends afterschool. 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.

— Aja Burris, student

Visit us sometime!

We are located at 705 Westminster Street in the West End of Providence, Rhode Island. The best time to catch the studio vibe is weekdays from 3-7pm when students and artist mentors are here.

Visit our website at www.newurbanarts.org or call 401.751.4556 for more information.

(clockwise from top left) Koyeawon Mendee, student; Elizabeth Jweinat works on a summer mural project; Tamara Kaplan gives one of many hugs; artwork by Tierah Harrison; 1st Alumni Artosgiving.
Program Highlights

This past year the biggest program highlight was enrolling 516 students, the largest in New Urban Arts history! On average there were 66 students on any given day. Our studio was bursting at the seams with students making and creating. Our sewing and fashion area was so popular that students were regularly spilling over into our library and screen print studio. Drive by the studio in the afternoon and the sounds of music, laughter, and light spills out onto the sidewalk.

While our numbers were high, we were happy to have piloted three new programs that allowed us to handle the increased number of students.

A Life After School
New Urban Arts is committed to supporting students as they transition out of high school. In partnership with College Visions, New Urban Arts piloted A Life After School (ALAS) mentor position to support students to plan and prepare for life after high school. Mai Nguyen worked 10 hours a week supporting over 30 students and recent alumni. In addition, the ALAS mentor helps coordinate and host the Not College Fair in the spring.

Studio Advocate
This year we launched a partnership with the Rhode Island College School of Social Work to host a MSW I internship each year at New Urban Arts. The Studio Advocate in this position provides 16 hours a week of additional social and emotional support to students and also guides artist mentors in establishing healthy relationships. We were thrilled to welcome former student, Joe Ash, as our first Studio Advocate!

Studio Assistants
New Urban Arts formalized an existing position this year, making two part-time positions for alumni students to be studio assistants. Studio Assistants support our programs during program hours, helping to welcome students, introduce them to mentors, encourage cleanup and enter attendance. These positions were a huge help for the studio to manage additional students. Thanks to Katie O’Connell and JP Cordina for piloting these positions.

2014–15 IMPACT REPORT

516 students enrolled in our after-school Youth Mentorship Program this year. On average, 66 students attended each day. Our average monthly attendance was 207 unique students.

3,334 attendees participated in 16 public events.

$119,000 in individual donations were received.

Revenue
- Foundation
- Individual
- Federal
- State / Municipal
- Fundraising / Events
- Other

Expenses
- Program
- Management / General
- Fundraising / Development

About the Youth We Serve

61% Female
38% Male
1% Other

21% LGBTQQ
28% High School Seniors
30% Juniors
24% Sophomores
18% Freshmen

61% Female
38% Male
1% Other

21% LGBTQQ
28% High School Seniors
30% Juniors
24% Sophomores
18% Freshmen

Learn more online at: newurbanarts.org/impact/

* 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.
Youth Mentorship in the Arts

The Youth Mentorship in the Arts is New Urban Arts’ core programming. Artist mentors work with high school students after school five days a week, for four hours a day. Our long-term goal for the program 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 with a plan for postsecondary success

Core Values

**CONNECTION:** Authentic experiences and bonds fuel us. We believe that everyone needs a mentor—someone to trust, to share honestly with, and who enables us to be accountable to ourselves.

**VOICE:** Young people prevail. The diverse voices of young people drive the direction of our programs and our organization.

**INCLUSION:** Everyone is on equal footing.

**LEADERSHIP:** The baton is yours for the taking. We believe everyone is ready to inspire or be inspired and that all of us have something to teach or to learn.

**RISK:** A push into new and positive directions. Find beauty in mistakes or failure. It is hard to dare when fear of screwing up, letting down, or reprisal looms. You can’t grow in mistakes or failure. It is hard to dare when fear of

New Urban Arts feels like a huge chocolate cake with a whole lot of love as its filling. I love chocolate cake.

—Marie Loua, student

---

Hello, We Are S.T.A.B.
(Studio Team Advisory Board)

We are a group of students at New Urban Arts who take on many different leadership roles in the studio. We help the rest of the staff to plan galleries and other special events. Another big part of our job is to welcome mentors and students into the studio. We hire new mentors and spend a lot of time during the Fall semester giving tours to incoming students.

This past year was jam-packed with events, new and old. We hosted our first annual Rock the Block party with 30 other community organizations and had an amazing turn out of over 1,100 people. We also had a very successful Cake or Pi(e) day, a signature NUA holiday.

New Urban Arts also hosted its second Not College Fair where programs like CityYear, YearUp, and AmeriCorps programs came to inform our students about alternative options to going to college after graduating. Studio Challenge Day focused on disconnecting from technology, so students couldn’t use anything that was plugged in for a whole day in the studio – including computers, hot glue guns and cell phones!

This year we lost our wonderful and beloved executive director Elia Gurna to sunny California. But we did not let her go without a proper NUA goodbye, which included a Harry Potter themed surprise party. The party was complete with magic wands, a sorting hat, and extravagant Great Hall decorations, and NUA truly felt like Hogwarts.

This past year we were happy to welcome so many new students into the studio. NUA has been unprecedentedly busy, and with an influx of students came an influx of creativity. The annual Midyear Maktins and Art Party galeries were especially successful as the walls were filled with student work.

With our growing population there has been talk of expanding our studio space to the basement, which is now used for storage. S.T.A.B. led student focus groups to gather ideas about how we could best utilize this basement space. Students came up with ideas such as a soundproof music room, separating wet media from dry media (such as screen printing from sewing) and having a space for quiet work, like poetry and tutoring with study buddies.

We are looking forward to another great year and welcoming more students and mentors into the New Urban Arts community.

High fives!

The Studio Team Advisory Board

---

Get involved...

...enroll as a student anytime throughout the year.
...mentor for an entire school year, from October through May. We accept applications every September.
...become a donor of tax-deductible art materials and equipment or monetary gifts.

Review our current wishlist:
bit.ly/NUA_link2015

Or donate through Paypal:
bit.ly/NUA_Give

...become a sponsor for exhibitions, performances, and our annual silent auction. Sponsorship information is online:
bit.ly/SponsorNUA

Application forms for students, artist mentors and volunteers are online at newurbanarts.org or at our studio at 705 Westminster Street.

---

2014-15 People

**Artist Mentors**
Alison Rutschi
Cara Adams
Eva Jely
Gabriel Anga
Jacques Achille
Jennifer Recinos
Katie Goo
Kedarfn Frias
Kevin Gemalows
Mimi Chozanski
Morgan Fargate
Pia Brar
Pelina Volofshek
Sydney Peak
Talkein Gilbert Brewer
Tina Fischer
Tycho Horan

**Studio Advocate**
Jos Auñ

**Studio Team Advisory Board (S.T.A.B.)**
Alejandra Mayorga
Alejandra Kunhardt
Axel Lozada
Apema Coburn-Sanderson
Brian Brooks
Gabrielle Hatch
Jesse Baez
Ishvesh Montepelli
Sili Wen
Trenton Lincoln
Kiyawson Mendes

**Studio Assistants**
J.P. Cordes
Katia O’Connell

**Office Rockstar**
Lydia Solano

**Intern**
Jennifer Morrison

**Staff**
Ashley Panipa
Connie Calvan
David Schiffer
Emily Utzach
Dwan Muir
Tamura Kaplan
Elia Gurna

**Resident Artist Mentors**
Dailen Williams
Anoush Ahba
Alejandra Perezita

**Award Winners**
El Rancho Grande,
Founders’ Award recipient
Ashley Panipa
Carole Hammen Memorial Award recipient
Mike Tanaka

**2014-15 Board of Directors**
Jane Andress
Douglas Best
Vernell Clouden
Stephen DelSesto
Tom Fitzgerald (chair)
Michael Fourmir
Lois Harada
John Herberger
Heather Kilmartin
Maryclare Knight
Craig Lamp
Diane S. Nahabedian
Mary Lee Partington
Rossi Silva
Sea Smith
Randolph Vialee

**2015-16 Board of Directors**
David Amos
Jane Andress
Douglas Best
Maria Cimini
Vernell Clouden
Stephen DelSesto
Tom Fitzgerald
Michael Fourmir
Lois Harada
Maryclare Knight (chair)
Craig Lamp
Diane S. Nahabedian
Mary Lee Partington
Rocio Silva
Paul Tavarez

---

New Urban Arts’ Alumni

© New Urban Arts Artist Mentor Alumni

---
Dear Future Mentor,

The box of mixed crayons at NUA warms my heart every time I visit it. I have gotten used to going to it regularly, grabbing a handful and plopping it on the middle of a drawing table. My hope in using this assortment of crayons is that NUA mentees (students) will see the possibilities in this handful of crayons to draw and animate anything that pops into their mind. The crayon is the medium of our childhoods, a time when all of us felt like artists. NUA is a space for everyone to feel that artistic confidence once again. I have been able to feel this confidence more and more every time I am in the studio surrounded by conversation and art making. It is a magical atmosphere to soak in and I always leave feeling a renewed sense of openness and possibility in what we all are capable of creating.

That's all I got,

Gabriel Anaya, artist mentor
The First Year of Our Newest Mentorship Program
‘A Life After School’

This past year was the first time New Urban Arts housed an A Life After School (ALAS) mentor position. NUA’s Director of Programs, Emily Ustach spoke with ALAS mentor Mai Nguyen and NUA Alum, Koyeawon Mendee about this new position.

EU: Mai, this was the first year of the ALAS mentor position, what were some of the challenges with starting a new program?

Mai: How do you take the magical spirit of NUA and transfer it to a seemingly loaded conversation of “what’s next”? My primary joy and challenge of being an ALAS mentor was reimagining how conversations around future in a youth-led open floor art studio would work. There is no office, no quiet, or files of high school transcripts. There is Bananagrams, paint splatter, and the consistent rumbling of dueling pianos and fresh beats. In the end, the marvelous chaos of the space allowed for extremely fruitful conversations and relationships.

EU: Koy, as someone who met with the ALAS mentor, why do you think it is important to have college support at NUA versus getting support in high school?

Koy: The guidance counselors at school are often times swamped, dealing with recommendations, sending forms out to college, and also trying to deal with the other students who are not seniors. At my high school, every senior received blue slips that provided thirty minutes of time with their guidance counselor….. and then that was kind of it. You could drop in a couple of times here and there, but it was clear that offering students the individualized support they needed was not possible. I think it is important for NUA to have the ALAS mentor because it provides another resource to students who aren’t in a college prep program or who may not know what they want to do after high school. I also went to a college prep high school, so life after high school was essentially, college. That might not be the path for other people, so having a resource that can also show you other options besides just going directly into college is important. Lastly, the presence itself is a great thing to have. NUA itself is a culture, and I think that it is great that there is such a diversity of students at the program. With that being said, thinking about the future may not be a thing that is automatically thought of instantly. Although my school sort of told us from the beginning that this was expected, I remember speaking to other people who said that their high school did not really provide something that pushed them towards thinking about what might happen beyond high school. It was sort of like “first, let’s see you graduate, and then you can see what you want to do.” Just having the mentor accessibility there is a good thing to have.

Key: Mai, did you ever feel overwhelmed, or felt like you weren’t doing “enough” in terms of all the students that you were dealing with during programming? If no, cool (because you literally did so much), but if yes, how did you combat that feeling?

Mai: All the time. So many youth come through NUA and I really wish I could have met everyone. I had to remind myself about my capacity. Some days I’d talk to one person for 4 hours, the next day I’d talk to what felt like 15 people for 5 minutes each! The truth is, trust takes time to build. Not every- one wants to talk about their future with a random person. But it starts with a game of UNO or a doodle session, and maybe in a few months we’ll get to the nitty gritty. I had to learn to slow down, breathe a little, and remember that this doesn’t happen overnight.

Mai: Koy, having been a part of the first ALAS Mentor program, what are your hopes and dreams for that position at NUA?

Key: I hope that the program embodies all it did last year and more. I think that the most important aspect of the ALAS mentor was the support, and also the patience. Being able to support multiple students who are all choosing to go every which way is something that I think takes a lot of time to master. It would be super cool if there was a real designated space for the mentor and their resources, which we sort of had last year but not really.

Mai Nguyen was the first ALAS mentor having previously been a creative writing mentor and taught the 2014 Untitlement Project at New Urban Arts. She is currently living in Seattle working with the non-profit organization FEEST (Food Empowerment Education Sustainability Team). She runs youth-led community dinners with high school students where they lead improvisational cooking. “We make cultural relevant foods and explore social justice issues that impact our lives. It all makes a ton of sense and deeply reminds me of NUA, where youth take the reigns, wield the knowledge and tools, and create the magic together.”

Koyeawon Mendee is currently a senior at Northeastern University, studying International Affairs and African-American Studies minor. She is also a tutor at 826 Boston, where she tutors youth during the weekdays, and helps with college application support on the weekends.
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.

—Alejandra Mayorga, student

We Remember Carole Harman

Carole Moses Harman was a founding Board member and lifetime advocate of young people and the arts. New Urban Arts would not be what it is today without Carole’s commitment and dedication to arts education. We are forever grateful!

Longtime mentor, alum, and current art teacher in the Providence Public School System Kedrin Frias writes:

I met Carole Harman in my freshman year at Central High School, when I was sent on an errand to deliver some supplies to her classroom. I immediately fell in love with her class. It was what I describe as a “Jungle of Art.” You had to climb around and dodge drawings and paintings in order to get in and out of the room. I quickly asked her if I could transfer into her class. She said to me, “don’t be late… I hate that,” and her second stipulation was “you have to take it seriously… no screwin’ around in my class.” Then she smirked and sent me on my way. That moment would change my life in so many ways.

Today I am a full-time elementary school teacher in the city of Providence, and this would definitely not be so if I hadn’t been the student of Carole Harman. She taught me to be ok with making mistakes, to do my best, and that it’s ok to start all over sometimes. These are lessons I pass on to my students today and forever. I am forever thankful to her and changed by the relationship I had with her. She is a great example that “no significant learning happens without a significant relationship.”

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.

—Camila Ramirez, student