News in 2010

Our third Conversations on Creative Practice series launched in March bringing unique individuals to the studio to share how they integrate creativity into their personal lives. The series was hosted by Arts Mentoring Fellows Emmy Bright and Kedrin Frias. Special thanks to: Sidney Tillet, Abigail Satinsky, Daniel Schleifer, Susan Sakash, Tatyana Yanishevskiy, Jean Wyand, Michael Cirelli, Elle Heyman, Walker Mettling, and Jenn Morea.

New Urban Arts exhibited work at X-treme Studio, an exhibition focused on the “active production of visual art,” at the A+D Gallery at Columbia College Chicago. Special Thanks to Arts Mentoring Fellow Emmy Bright, Arts Mentoring Fellow Emeritus Andrew Bosch, and current students Noel Puille and Tina Meetran.

Each year we partner with College Visions, a college access program for high school students who most often are the first in their families to attend higher education. This fall our students will be attending college at: Union College, Guilford College, Hampshire College, University of Rochester, University of Rhode Island, and Community College of Rhode Island.

A Collections and Archives resource guide based on our 2009 New Urban Arts Summer Art Inquiry is now available online at www.newurbanarts.org.

This year we were commissioned by the Providence Public School District to lead multiple professional development workshops for the city’s K-12 art teachers.

New Urban Arts students hosted the first Providence Zine Fair in April. Look inside for the interview with student Emely Barros to learn more about the twelve-hour youth-led celebration of self-publishing.

The first New Urban Arts Spirit Week launched in March. There’s an interview inside with student Noel Puille about what Executive Director Jason Yoon calls, “The best day at New Urban Arts.”

The Studio Team Advisory Board closes out the year with an amazing beachside leadership retreat. The weekend was a time to reflect and celebrate each other and the work that was done throughout the year. Go STAB!

New Urban Arts was awarded its first-ever General Operating Support Grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. This grant demonstrates our central and vital role in the Rhode Island arts community.

On New Year’s Eve, under a snowy blue moon, in their hometown of Palatine, Illinois, Program Director Sarah Meyer married her longtime fiancé, New Urban Arts’ favorite cellist Seth Gruenwald.

In February New Urban Arts welcomed our first-ever development associate Daniel Schleifer. Daniel has been a member of our community since fall 2007 when he piloted our Studio Study Buddy program.

We thank Cherry Arnold, Laurie Bosman, Angela Manioudakis, Carla Stern, Christine Treddell, and Matthew Whalen for their service on the New Urban Arts Board of Directors! Welcome to new board members Heather Kilmarin, Maryclaire Knight, Randolph Vialva and Peter Crump. Read more about them at newurbanarts.org/people_board.html.

NEW URBAN ARTS

is a nationally recognized arts studio and gallery for high school students and emerging artists in Providence, Rhode Island. 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. We serve over 300 high school students, 20 emerging artists and over 2,000 visitors through free youth programs, professional development, artist residencies and public performances, workshops and exhibitions each year.

In 2009, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities named us one of the nation’s top 15 youth arts programs with a Coming Up Taller award.

Visit newurbanarts.org for more information.
2010 by the numbers

466 students enrolled in our after-school Youth Mentorship Program this year, a 50% increase from the year before! Participation rates have continued to rise, with an average of 164 students actively participating in the studio each month.

100% agreed or strongly agreed that New Urban Arts is a safe and supportive environment.

87% of students rated New Urban Arts' programs “outstanding.”

95% of student participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have built strong, trusting relationships and developed a way of creating that expresses who they are.

21 artists and 2 tutors volunteered over 4,000 hours to mentor Providence high school students this year.

250 hours of summer programming offered paid internships in the arts for 33 youth.

9 seniors participated in College Visions, a yearlong college preparatory program, and are attending colleges around the country, among them: University of Rochester and Union College in New York, Hampshire College in Massachusetts, Guilford College in North Carolina and the University of Rhode Island.

1,900 people attended 21 events and exhibitions at New Urban Arts this year, the majority free and open to the public.

New Urban Arts’ programs “outstanding.” 87% of students rated New Urban Arts' programs “outstanding.”

250 hours of summer programming.

“New Urban Arts is a small sample of the stories, the breakthroughs and the big ideas that you make possible through your generous support. Thank you for all that you do and continue to do.”

Sincerely,

Myrth York, Chair , Board of Directors

“New Urban Arts, you make mistakes and learn from them. In school you just get an ‘F’ for that.”

-Tiffany Urena, New Urban Arts student
New Urban Arts’ First Ever Zine Fair!

An interview with Emily Barros, STAB member, the lead organizer of the Zine Fair:

On Saturday April 10, 2010, the Studio Team Advisory Board (STAB) hosted New Urban Arts’ first ever Zine Fair. Zines are small circulation, non-commercial publications. The New Urban Arts Zine Fair was free, open to the public and gave vendors and distributors the opportunity to purchase table space to sell comics, pharmacy, zines, or any other independently published works. Our fair also included workshops, a panel discussion, and games including a Zine Toss and, at the end of the day, the smashing of a “zilata,” which spilled buttons, stickers, mini zines and candy onto the floor.

Let’s start at the beginning. Tell me about the Zine Team.

EB: Zine Team was originally a program here for five weeks where New Urban Arts students came and did different activities and went on field trips that were all zine-related. Throughout the whole thing we’d be making zines, and then we’d swap our zines with each other.

How many years has the zine team/swap been happening?

EB: Since the summer of 2006, and then it became Zine Camp this year, which was one week, with me and mentor Meredith (Younger). So we’ve had zine swaps before, but never a Fair where people sell stuff.

Why did you decide to do the Zine Fair this year?

EB: One summer in 2006, with Melissa Mendes and Meredith, they wanted to do this thing called the Zineopicon. It was supposed to be panels with artists, and we were going to make the library all pretty. It seemed really cool, but we ran out of space, and it was supposed to be a symposium, but for all things zine. There was another student, and then they made this called “What is Person?”

With interview zines, they interview each other while they’re making it and they put the answers into whatever format they want; it’s a really good ice breaker that we do in Zine Team, so that was my workshop for the day. We’d had these questions set up, and the answers they came up with were these crazy, hilarious things, and when they made it, it came out really awesome looking and beautiful!

How did it feel to officially mentor for the first time at this summer’s New Urban Arts Zine Camp?

EB: At first I was really nervous. I never really thought of myself as a mentor; I thought I was a mentor-assistant to Meredith. It was different than being a student here because I felt like I could do more, and I had a mentor box! It was a really strange but awesome feeling of independence. Emily is now a freshman on a scholarship at Hampshire College pursuing her love of comics and visual arts.
I hear a lot in school about students being excited for the bell to ring just so they can come to New Urban Arts. I think that’s important for kids to have something to do after school where they are supervised and can still experiment.

– Lydia Rojas, student participant

New Urban Arts is a place where I can go with people from all over the city who are interested in a lot of other things that I really haven’t heard or ever thought about doing.

– Johnathan Vinas, student participant

New Urban Arts is one of the most important things to me in the world.

– Austin Barry, student participant
New Urban Arts has and will always be a place filled with love. No place on earth has ever made me feel more welcome, more loved, more accepted, and I am eternally grateful to you, New Urban Arts.

– Emely Barroso, student participant

My mentor is confident, inventive and important to me. We can talk to each other about almost anything. I'll always be thankful for the time I spent with her, and I’ll miss the unconditional support she gives me for all the things I do.

– Stephanie Acevedo, student participant

My artist mentor will be a source for inspiration for me for the rest of my life.

– Philip Ullman, student participant

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– Emely Barroso, student participant
Upcoming Events

December 10: Artist Mentor Exhibition
January 28: Student Mid-Year Exhibition
May 20: End of Year Art Party

Check www.newurbanarts.org for more details on our gallery events, as well as up to date additions to our event calendar.

This year, from March 8-12, New Urban Arts held its first ever Spirit Week. Spirit Week was the brainchild of Studio Team Advisory Board member Noel Puello. Here’s an overview of the week:

Monday: Pajama Day
Tuesday: Student Becomes the Mentor Day
Wednesday: Stuffed Animal Day
Thursday: Fort Day
Friday: Potluck Day

Why did you decide to do a Spirit Week at New Urban Arts?

NP: Because we were doing it in school, and the one at school is not very fun. I thought that if we were to do it at New Urban Arts, it would be exciting, fun and totally different.

How did you go about organizing and promoting it?

NP: About two weeks before Spirit Week, I put the potential theme days on different posters and asked everyone to check off what they liked. Everyone in the studio voted. The whole week before, everyday, I would make Jesse do his howling noise (ed note: Studio Manager Jesse Banks makes a siren noise in order to initiate studio huddles), and I told everyone that next week was Spirit week and remind people of what was happening because they like art so they all got into it.

What were you hoping would happen?

NP: That everyone would interpret each day in a different way, and that everyone would be really outrageous and fun with it.

Did you feel like your hopes came true?

NP: I did, it was actually better than I expected. Like for fort day, I thought everyone would make a little tiny fort and we’d all crawl into it and then be bored with it, but the forts were way bigger than I expected and almost everyone participated in some way.

Do you think you’ll do Spirit Week next year?

NP: Totally!

What was your favorite day?

NP: Fort Day. Making forts is just fun in general; it made us feel like little kids all over again. It brought out something of New Urban Arts that I haven’t seen before. Everyone was just so into it and working together. It was really fun and challenging. The best moment was when we had this yelling fight, and we were attacking everyone else’s fort. We also built an igloo wall.

I associate Spirit Week with school sports, and I think of New Urban Arts as a space that’s pretty different from school. Did you think about that at all?

NP: Kind of, when you go to school, every other day is like, “wear a football jersey,” or “play tennis.” There’s no art, and there’s no freedom there, but when you come to New Urban Arts, you can express yourself, so you can express a Spirit Week theme in your own little way. If you’re doing a spirit week in school, there are people who aren’t into sports, so not everyone gets into it, but at New Urban Arts, everyone’s here because they like art and so they all get into it.

What were you hoping would happen?

NP: That everyone would interpret each day in a different way, and that everyone would be really outrageous and fun with it.

What is New Urban Arts to me?

Sarah is currently a graduate student at Lesley University studying art education.

When I walked into New Urban Arts for the first time, I hadn’t made art in months.

I knew that being a mentor at New Urban Arts was going to help me heal my art block. I had no idea it would change everything else. I didn’t know how much I’d fall in love with the students here, how much they would impress me with their compassion, their talent, their commitment, how much it would mean to me to be invited into such an important part of their lives. I didn’t know that the other mentors, the staff and the fellows would be so supportive of me, so willing to lend a hand or an ear or a shoulder whenever I needed it. I didn’t know I’d discover that nothing makes me happier than seeing the excitement and pride on the face of a student who’s showing me something she made herself, something she learned with my help or encouragement, hearing her say “I can do this.”

So what is New Urban Arts to me?

It’s a small table covered in paper, scattered with markers, surrounded by laughter, where we learn during a giant game of drawing war that hot sauce defeats a kraken.

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So what is New Urban Arts to me?

It’s a small table covered in paper, scattered with markers, surrounded by laughter, where we learn during a giant game of drawing war that hot sauce defeats a kraken.

It’s an expedition to the darkest recesses of the basement—never finding exactly what we’re looking for but always returning with something else, a new idea and the seeds of new friendships born out of a shared adventure. It’s an ocean overflowing the front window with spontaneous mixed-media collaborations, proudly displaying our diversity, our talent, our ridiculous sense of humor.

It’s knowing that every time I walk in the door, I will be smiled at, I will be hugged, someone will want to sit down and talk to me, someone will want to show me something they made, and someone will want to make something—with me. It’s that excitement, that trust, that sharing of what’s most important in our lives—our art, ourselves—that defines this studio for me, that’s made me so much taller this year, tall enough to see over the top of my fears and my doubts to what’s right there in front of me. My future.

And oh, by the way, I’m making art again. And I love it. Most of all I love making it here, with my students, my friends.
An interview with Program Director Sarah Meyer about her sabbatical

How did you prepare for your sabbatical?

SM: When I found out I would be taking a sabbatical, it felt like such a luxury and I put a lot of pressure on myself to live up to such an opportunity. I had been expecting that I would use this time for ambitious projects – from a cross-country road trip visiting community arts organizations to a cross-country road trip visiting community arts organizations. I’ve long admired to publishing my writing and learning bookmaking techniques. I eventually realized that what I needed most was time to rest and rejuvenate. So I abandoned my lengthy sabbatical to-do lists (of which there were 24 pages) and my goal for my sabbatical became getting lost in ideas rather than lists.

What did you do for the rest of your sabbatical?

SM: I found myself organizing my personal archives, which included four large bins of papers from my graduate school years, my personal e-mail account with ten years of correspondence (which revived old friendships), photo albums, closets, computer files and online bookmarks, recipe collection, etc. Sorting and filing through resources became an important step in clearing my head. I visited the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis and attended one of their youth advisory council meetings. I also revisited the readings that have guided my philosophy and approach to community-based arts practice with young people and added new titles to my library. I started a blog of what I’m reading: www.insidemybookshelf.blogspot.com

Did you continue to interact with New Urban Arts in any way during your sabbatical?

SM: I participated in the studio zine swap and traded my zine with other students and artists at New Urban Arts. My zine was about my practice of making to-do lists. With a summer away from them as a necessity, I came to it now and then. My zine was about my practice of making to-do lists.

What was it like coming back?

SM: I noticed when babysitting that kids would panic when their parents made a loud exit. It seemed to work best when I would immediately begin activities with the children and the parents would duck out the back door. I approached my sabbatical in a similar way. I quietly exited after the first week of programs. I came back two months later in the fall, just in time to hire artist mentors for the year. I think sneaking out helped me sneak back in. When babysitting, kids wake up to their parents being back at home the next morning as though they had never left.

Do you feel like you accomplished what you wanted to during your sabbatical?

SM: I wanted to return to New Urban Arts with new energy and a renewed commitment to this work. I found it reaffirming to learn that rest actually heals and builds muscle. I've long admired to publishing my writing and learning bookmaking techniques. I eventually realized that what I needed most was time to rest and rejuvenate. So I abandoned my lengthy sabbatical to-do lists (of which there were 24 pages) and my goal for my sabbatical became getting lost in ideas rather than lists.

I wish New Urban Arts was around when I was a kid.

by Peter Hocking

I’ve been privileged to be part of New Urban Arts since its earliest days, as an advisor, board member, volunteer and financial contributor. Over the past two years, I worked with the organization in a new way, as one of the first Arts Mentoring Fellows. After years of understanding the organization from a governance and, frankly, theoretical point of view, being a Fellow allowed me to understand the deep value of the organization—and to see, feel and know how New Urban Arts is an experience of both intellectual and embodied learning for youth and mentors.

Importantly, New Urban Arts helps students find and utilize their innate capacities as learners—enabling learning that's focused, of deep duration and that results in discovery and meaningful products. As a result, students at New Urban Arts demonstrate a self-directed passion for learning and the concomitant skills necessary to be critical thinkers in any area with which they become engaged.

Over the years, I’ve heard a lot of adults—many of whom grew up, like me, with considerable privilege, resources and educational support—say that they wish a place like New Urban Arts existed when they were young. This sentiment has compelled me to consider why New Urban Arts elicits such enthusiasm. While its storefront studio is inviting, it's hardly spacious. The staff goes to great ends to ensure that students have the supplies and support they need and want to fuel their creative inquiries; however, as much is made of recycled materials as of top-of-the-line art supplies.

The value of New Urban Arts doesn’t lie in material assets; rather it resides in the quality of the relationships the organization enables.

Like those who wish they’d had a place like New Urban Arts growing up, I am grateful to have the organization in my life. While I arrived too late in my life to receive the foundational experiences it offers so many youth, my recent association has offered me a renewed sense of optimism in our cultural ability to be present to one another and to support the curiosity and profound development of young people.

Peter Hocking is the Director of RISD’s office of Public Engagement.
thank you!

Private Foundations and Public Support
The National Endowment for the Arts
The Rhode Island Foundation and the Richard and Vera Griswold Family Fund
The Rhode Island Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center Program
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Our 2010 Annual Campaign ran from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. If you need an error contact daniel@newurbanarts.org and we will accept your apologies.

Visit us sometime! We are located at 743 Westminster Street in the West End of Providence, Rhode Island. The best time to catch the studio vibe is weekdays from 3-5pm. Visit us sometime!

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