

YO! VENICE

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Venice Arts Ignites Creative Imagination

and expand their sense of possibility through high-quality, accessible arts programs,

with a focus on providing youth, from ages 5 and up, with a variety of arts and cultural experiences. Our programs are designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for youth to explore their creativity and develop their skills. We offer a wide range of programs, including visual arts, music, dance, and theater. Our programs are open to all youth, regardless of their background or ability. We also offer consulting and training services for schools and community organizations. To find out more about Venice Arts or to make a donation to support our programs, visit www.venicearts.org.

Consulting & Training for schools and community organizations. We have also become a destination for adults, with free exhibitions and events through our Gallery & Public Program.

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Rickie Bautista has been a student at Venice Arts for the past four years. He is currently enrolled in an advanced photography class while working as a paid intern at the Lincoln Blvd. creative space. See story on page 4.

PHOTO BY MELANIE CAMP

Venice Arts

Helps Youth Imagine Brighter Futures



Venice Arts offers free classes to low-income youth. Small class sizes allow mentors to help students in a range of creative fields. COURTESY PHOTOS

Melanie Camp Managing Editor

Local charity Venice Arts has been inspiring low-income youth for 22 years, encouraging them to imagine beyond their perceived limitations, opening up a world of opportunity.

The organization was started by a group of community members in Venice who wanted a way to connect low-income youth in the community with artists for mentoring and education.

Lynn Warshafsky was one of the co-founders and currently serves as Executive Director.

Warshafsky has seen Venice Arts grow from humble beginnings in 1993, where it mentored just 10 students who worked out of a donated darkroom, to the large, open-plan creative space that serves as its home today at 1702 Lincoln Blvd., Venice.

Associate Director Elysa Voshell said all of its classes are free for low-income families.

"We also do gallery exhibitions and public programs for both youth and adults here in our space," Voshell said.

Venice Arts also accepts a small number of paying students who are interested in furthering their creative skills.

"It's all multi-media, media-based arts," Voshell said. "We offer photography, film making, animation, and comics – we do both analogue and digital. We have a traditional environment so students in our intermediate photography classes get to explore the darkroom and working with film, working with film cameras, learning how to print, and they're also getting really sophisticated skills in digital media."

While students have access to state-of-the-art equipment in the Venice Art classrooms, a student led campaign to increase their access to the latest technology and equipment has been launched.

In an effort to unlock the YouTube Space down the road in Playa Vista, students are recruiting subscribers on their VeniceArts YouTube channel. They already have 700 and are in the home stretch of reaching their goal of 1,000 subscribers.

"Our model is a mentoring model, it's about really deeply serving a small number of kids. This helps them develop as creative young people through that experience," Voshell said. "We have a lead artist in every classroom as well as volunteer artist mentors so they help to keep a ratio of one adult for every three students in the workshops so students are getting really close mentoring."

These small class sizes allow mentors to help students with portfolio development, applications for scholarships and contents, film festival submissions, applications to college, as well as internships.

"So really supporting them across the board in their creative development," Voshell said. "We see the most impact when we have kids in our program over a number of years so we give priority enrollment to students who have taken classes with us before."

Both this year and last, two students from Venice Arts were finalists for the National Young Arts Awards. Across the country only 10 students in photography were chosen, two of them were from the Venice Arts program.

"They got to go to Miami for a week all expenses paid," Voshell said. "One of the students ended up winning the silver award. Last year they won silver and gold and they got \$5,000 and \$10,000 scholarships for college."

Also last year, a Venice Arts student was one of 20 nationwide to win a prestigious Presidential Scholarship in the Arts.

"Our teaching staff are amazing and they work with each student to help them craft their portfolios, helping to connect them to these opportunities that they would not have otherwise," Voshell said. "We often have students who are the first in their family to go to college."

Venice Arts also offers paid internships for advance students. On top of this, they have also placed students in internships at companies like Brave New Films, NBC Universal, and Sundance.

"This way students can get real world experience and connect their classroom learning with how it might fit into a career path," Voshell said.

Rickie Bautista has been a student at Venice Arts for four years now and is currently employed as a paid intern at their office on Lincoln Blvd. He is also enrolled in the Venice Arts advanced photography class.

"I never really thought of me as a photographer,"

Bautista said. "I had this one friend who would take pictures and I really like the way she used Photoshop. I kind of envied her in a way because she had this expensive program and I wasn't able to have a program like that. I wasn't able to have a camera, or things like that which are really expensive and here I'm able to use all of this kind of equipment."

Bautista said his mother found out about the classes in 2011 and insisted he enroll.

"I didn't really want to because I didn't want to speak to people," he said. "I was really closed off from people and I felt awkward whenever I spoke to people."

Bautista credits Venice Arts for helping him open up and giving him a confidence he believes he would have never discovered on his own.

"It's really a great opportunity and I'm glad my mom found out about it and that I was able to do it," he said.

Get behind Venice Arts and help them unlock the YouTube Space. They need 1,000 subscribers to their YouTube channel VeniceArts, get online and help a great local charity.

For more information, visit www.venicearts.org.

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