

JOSEPH C. WILSON MAGNET HS

The Chronicle of a Mural Foretold

The Carl Peters Project

IB Senior Class of 2015

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The purpose of this document is to chronicle Ms. Suzanne Curtice's IB Visual Art students' process in creating a mural that represents the city of Rochester's current community and vision through the insights of their personalities and lives. This present day mural is inspired by the artwork of Carl Peters, whose murals of progress and industry were created as part of the government-funded Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) between 1935 -1943. Since (insert year), two of these murals, "Pioneer Family" and "Indian Group" have been displayed in the Joseph C. Wilson Magnet H.S. auditorium. The new mural, "A World of Our Own," 2015 will be exhibited alongside the Carl Peters's murals to be admired for years to come.

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Biographical Questions

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What elements of Carl Peters's art do you appreciate the most?
3. How would you describe yourself as an artist?
4. If you had an opportunity to talk to someone one hundred years in the future, how would you describe your generation?
5. What is your favorite part of Rochester?
6. What is your favorite part of IB Visual Arts (IBVA)?
7. What is your favorite part of IBVA?
8. What was your first and last impression of IBVA?
9. What message do you think that Carl Peters's murals expresses?
10. What college do you plan on attending?

Suzanne Curtice

Suzanne Curtice is our dutiful art teacher. We have had her art instruction for the past two years, and she truly is a remarkable human being. Among her students, she is known as “Curtice” or “Suzie Q,” and is currently one of the coolest teachers at Joseph C. Wilson Magnet HS.

Her favorite aspect of Carl Peters’s artwork is his color palette and his way of creating a narrative in each mural. Curtice appreciates how Peters was able to utilize ‘hidden’ objects, such as a blank blueprint, to add symbolism to his murals’ narratives.

Curtice describes herself as an expressionist who doesn’t consider herself to be abstract. When she paints, she loves to work on a large scale, using loose strokes that convey a lot of movement.

Curtice loves Rochester so much— she loves the art scene, she loves her house, and she loves the proximity of how close she is to different landscapes, such as Lake Ontario and Highland Park.

Her favorite part of teaching IB Visual Arts is, of course, her students. Curtice went to IB teacher training three years before she was told that she was going to be the new IB Visual Arts teacher. Initially, she thought that this particular course was going to be a challenge, but she loves her work and her students, and is happy to be doing this program. She believes wholeheartedly in IB Visual Arts, and, in her opinion, this is how art should be taught. She has been known to say that an IB student doesn’t just create art, there has to be meaning behind the art, which to her is very important.

Curtice believes that Carl Peters’s murals capture the history of their time for posterity and contextualize interesting ideas of progress as a working class ideology.

Carmelo Ortiz

Carmelo “Mr Mel” Ortiz is our visiting artist for the Carl Peters Project. He has been a teaching artist for the past 10 years, working with a variety of ages, from young children to adults. We have appreciated his guidance on the making our mural, “A World of Our Own,” 2015.

“Mr. Mel” started as a graffiti artist in New York City when he was 11 or 12. This means that he’s been a graffiti artist for majority of his life. He’s the youngest of 5 children and came from a home where his father mentally abused his mother, which caused her to turn to alcohol as her outlet. At the age of nine, he was homeless for two years because his father left his mother, which caused his home life to be unstable.

Ortiz’s father was also living a double life; so when he left Carmelo’s mom, he already had another family in another state and went to live with them. During his childhood, whenever he was feeling sad or happy or lonely, his artwork was his outlet. He proved to be an exceptional artist. However, his mother believed that it wasn’t going to amount to anything.

Growing up in the Bronx had its lessons, and in “Mr. Mel’s” time of living the street life, Rap music and Hip Hop was just beginning to make its mark. As a young child, “Mr. Mel” was involved in this music scene, drawing graffiti characters for tee shirts and posters for musicians who were making their way in this music scene. “Mr. Mel” believes that his involvement with these musicians and artists kept him from getting into trouble and going to jail.

As time passed, “Mr. Mel” realized that he wanted to get serious about his artwork. He truly understood this when he looked into his firstborn daughter’s eyes for the first time and realized that he couldn’t live the life that he had been living.

At the age of 30, he applied to Rochester Institute of Technology’s Graphic Design department where he was instructed to complete a series of drawings as his entrance exam. He accomplished these drawings immediately and turned them in to be reviewed by the department. The professors knew that they had to have him there and then they accepted him as a student. However, due to the cost of a college degree, Mr. Mel elected to do a two plus two program, beginning at Monroe Community College, where he was recognized and encouraged by his art mentor, Joe Hendricks.

Carmelo’s artwork is featured at the mag

“Mr. Mel” is his toughest critic. He believes that his work is very expressive. He likes to draw the letters of his name with characters that fit the equation. He likes to draw the most intricate compositions. He feels like it’s always a competition where ‘respect’ is earned. “Fame is the name of the game, the mark matters,” he says. Being an advisor for this project, he feels that the IBVA students were great to work. This is the first time he’s worked with a group of teens who know what they want out of life. He feels that we know the importance of our education, and he

didn't have to come in and act like a teacher or a disciplinary. He was thrilled to work with us, letting us express what we wanted in our mural and showing us what was and wasn't possible. He felt it was a strong and meaningful collaboration.

Pech Punleu Chhun

Pech describes himself as a hard-working, compassionate student, who is living the American dream. As an artist, he tries to explore what is visually pleasing. He believes that he is an abstract artist. Like any generation, he thinks that our generation has been dealt a certain hand of cards, yet we are fully capable of playing our hands in the way that we see fit. His favorite parts of Rochester are High Falls, the reservoir, and the tennis courts. In the future, Pech plans on being a happy outlier in poverty stats, and will be studying at the University of Rochester next year as a Biology major.

Kaleb Chitaphong

Kaleb describes himself as creative and well-rounded artist. He likes to focus on deep ideas in his artwork, but stresses on composition. If he were to talk to someone in the future, he would tell them about the things that he experienced. Kaleb appreciates the broad historical relevance and the contextual images that allow you to determine what it was like in Karl Peters's time. Kaleb will be attending the University of Rochester next year to study political science.

Aneisha Ezell

Aneisha describes herself as goofy, friendly, and well-rounded. As an artist, she is very neat and loves to work with a tighter media so she can control the outcome. Aneisha describes our generation as being very bright. She believes that there are a lot of misconceptions about us because we are judged based on the actions of others. However, she feels that a lot of us are ambitious, and through hard work and determination, will become great people. Aneisha's favorite part of Rochester is feeling "at home". After high school, she will be attending Canisius College to pursue a degree in psychology and nursing.

Ayana McCuller

Ayana describes herself as independent, stubborn, tenacious, and open-minded. As an artist she enjoys working in 3D. Her artwork is expressive because she illustrates her poetry. Ayana's words of wisdom to the future generation are: "Everything is not as though it seems." Ayana's favorite parts of Rochester are: ARTISANworks, Cobbs Hill Park, and any track where she can train for her long distance running. She will be attending the Rochester Institute of Technology next year, majoring in journalism.

Makeba Monroe

Natasha Morrison

Natasha, also known as Tasha, describes herself as very outgoing and friendly. She enjoys the simple things in life, and loves art class. She believes that our generation is confused and cluttered, and doesn't know where they're going. Her favorite parts of IBVA is how our class became a family, and how we grew to know each other's art techniques. Her favorite part of Rochester is Charlotte Beach when it isn't dirty. Natasha will be attending Niagara University next year, in hopes of becoming a clinical psychologist.

Lynh Nguyen

Lynh describes herself as Asian, but more importantly as really chill. Lynh is a people person. She likes to draw people, using cool over warm colors, and she likes to capture light on water. Her art is simple but meaningful. She believes that life now is technologically advanced. However, she doesn't like how kids are playing with computers instead of their toys. Her favorite parts of Rochester are Park Ave, and wherever you can find Fro-Yo. Next year, Lynh is going to the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City so that she can become a fashion stylist.

Kiara Poole

Kiara describes herself as an independent, well-rounded risk-taker. She likes to explore different subjects. She plans on taking her intellectual curiosity to college. Kiara believes that life, from the 1950s to now, has changed dramatically. Her favorite part of Rochester is Genesee Valley Park. Kiara was initially nervous about doing IBVA; but ultimately, she really enjoyed it, and wants to carry on with her education, in order to educate our generation on the past. Next year, Kiara will be attending Monroe Community College. She will be enrolled in a two plus two program in hopes of becoming a pediatrician.

Heather Puente

Heather describes herself as a short, nice person, who is both peaceful and adventurous. All of Heather's artwork contains a background story that is related to her life. She believes that our society needs more awareness of what is happening to its community. Even though people are becoming more open-minded, Heather thinks that they are still confused. Heather's favorite part of Rochester is its history. Heather dreams of becoming a social worker when she gets older.

Jenna Steger

Jenna describes herself as an enthusiastic individual who loves making others laugh. Her artwork explores environmental issues using mostly 3D media. Her advice to the future would be to enjoy every moment and to “hug your parents” as Libbie (Mrs. Tobin) always says. My favorite part of Rochester is Genesee Valley Park, and basically anywhere where her friends are. Next year, Jenna will be attending the Rochester Institute of Technology and majoring in Environmental Sustainability, Health and Safety Management.

Nasharilys Torres

Nasharilys is also known as Nasha or Nash. Nasha doesn't like to take risks with her art. She focuses on her emotions in her art, which makes her an expressionist. With the today's advancements in technology, she believes that our society is more diverse than it was in the past. Her favorite parts of Rochester are the artsy sides, like Park Ave, and its unique food offerings, like the garbage plates. Nasha has hopes of becoming a radiologist and will be attending Rochester Institute of Technology next year.

DeAndre Vaden

DeAndre describes himself as a kind, caring, compassionate, silly, and emotional person. DeAndre's artwork is very emotion driven. He believes that his best work conveys negative emotions, and his work that is based off of positive emotions isn't as good. He believes that our society is very naked, very ignorant, and very sex driven. His favorite part of Rochester is the Lilac Festival because of the music and the food. DeAndre wants to be a clinical psychiatrist when he gets older.

Process:

On April 8th, 2015: Poet M.J. Iuppa, along with Teaching Artist Carmelo Ortiz, Carol Yost, Estelle B. Goldman Assistant Curator of Education Memorial Art Gallery, visited Ms. Suzanne Curtice's IB Visual Art class to brainstorm about the 'Continuing the Mural Tradition at Joseph C. Wilson Magnet HS.'

During this session, we sat as a group in at a large drawing table and looked closely at prints of Carl Peters's murals; in particular *Life in Action*.

Iuppa asked us to look at the mural *Life in Action* and generate descriptive words under the following categories:

Example:

Landscape	Color	Emotions	Objects	Action Verbs
City in Clouds	Blue	Determined	Blank Blueprint	Working

We talked about what was explicitly seen in the mural. The concrete images (what we could see, taste, touch, smell, hear) demonstrated work's industry and invention' and what was implicitly understood in the mural, such as the dreams of the future's success through hard work.

We could infer meaning, by interpreting the symbolism of the images, such as the blank blueprint which symbolized the future ideas and work to come.

We were puzzled about the figures' blank expressions. Did it convey the determination and concentration needed for the work that the figures were accomplishing? We could see that the figures were building both physically and intellectually together. This in itself made us realize the power of a community of workers.

To go further, we wrote an Ekphrastic poem based on this mural, using the words generated in the categories in our word spill. Each of us contributed to this poem, line by line, which captured the meaning behind the mural.

Study for *Life of Action*

after Carl W. Peters's mural, *Life of Action*

We heard the sounds of engines purring,
The hems flattering metal—
Jackhammers grinding—

We see the proliferous progress,
A future industrial succession—
With determined expression.

We taste tomorrow with great
Compression in the ambition
Of our progression

That becomes a new lesson
For our children.

Composed on 4/8/2015, with Mrs. Curtice's class.

After our study of Peters's *Life of Action*, we began to brainstorm what we wanted for our present day mural. Using the same categories we came up with another word spill:

Landscape	Color	Emotions	Objects	Action Verbs
Rochester skyline	Spring palette	determination focus, ambition	lilacs, river, Parks	living, vital, active

We discussed the presence of technology in our work and future. How we interact and work together as a diverse community.

From this brainstorming, we began to sketch the concrete images that would stylistically pay homage to Peters's mural tradition, but also allow our mural to evolve into our vision of the future.



Above: Our final composition sketch of the mural.

Below: Due to the fact that the mural canvases are large and unyielding, we had to paint the canvases on the floor of the auditorium stage. The following sequence of photographs show us priming the canvases that were later taken and stretched onto frames.



Pictured: Suzanne Curtice, Aneisha Ezell, Mitchell Jeanotte, Makeba Monroe, Heather Puente, Jenna Steger, Nasharilys Torres, and Carol Yost



Pictured: Makeba Monroe and Nasharilys Torres.



Pictured: Aneisha Ezell, Makeba Monroe, Kiara Poole, and Heather Puente.



Pictured: Aneisha Ezell, Kiara Poole, Heather Puente, Jenna Steger, Nasharilys Torres, and DeAndre Vaden.



Pictured Left: Kaleb Chitaphong, Suzanne Curtice, Kiara Poole, Heather Puente, and Jenna Steger.



Pictured Right: Kiara Poole, Heather Puente, Jenna Steger, and Nasharilys Torres.



Pictured Left: Stick and half-primed canvas



Pictured Right: Aneisha Ezell, Kiara Poole, Heather Puente, Nasharilys Torres and DeAndre Vaden.



Pictured Left: Kaleb Chitaphong, Suzanne Curtice, Kiara Poole and Nasharilys Torres.



Pictured Right: Kaleb Chitaphong, Suzanne Curtice, Mitchell Jeanotte, Makeba Monroe, Kiara Poole, and Nasharilys Torres



Pictured Left: Mitchell Jeanotte, Makeba Moroe, Jenna Steger, and Nasharilys Torres.



Pictured Right: Makeba Monroe, Jenna Steger, and DeAndre Vaden.



Pictured Left: Mithell Jeanotte, Kiara Poole, and Nasharilys Torres



Pictured Right: Kaleb Chitaphong, Aneisha Ezell, Mitchell Jeanotte, Makeba Monroe, Kiara Poole, Jenna Steger, Nasharilys Torres, and DeAndre Vaden.



Pictured Left: Aneisha Ezell, Makeba Monroe, Kiara Poole, Jenna Steger, and DeAndre Vaden.



Pictured Right: Kaleb Chitaphong, Mitchell Jeanotte, and Nasharilys Torres.



Pictured: After slaving away for days priming the unstretched canvas, we discovered that the canvas had to be stretched before we primed it. This is the unprimed canvas on the stretch boards which are visible through the canvas.



Pictured: After priming the first stretched canvas (which was extremely difficult because the canvas was really fuzzy and the paint wouldn't really stick), it was discovered that the canvas was a perfect white background for a selfie. So Kaleb, Lynh and Jenna decided to pose for a picture.



Pictured: Every day while working on the mural, before we start painting we put down a tarp so that the paint wouldn't get all over the floor of our beautiful stage. Curtice is holding down the tarp so that everyone else could spread it out.



Pictured: After putting down the tarp, Aneisha Ezell is getting ready to prime the canvas to the left. Meanwhile, others draw the mural's outline on the canvas to the right.



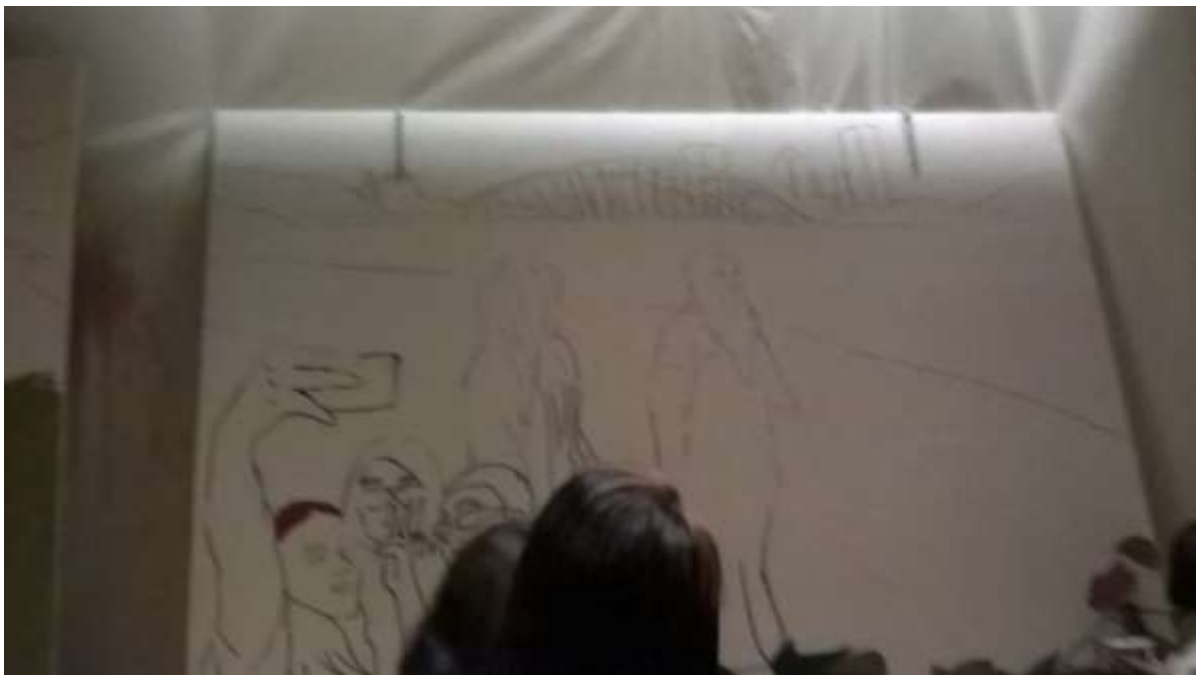
Pictured: Pech is priming the canvas to the right, while we try to size the pictures that we took to the scale of the mural. We did this using a projector so that we could outline the picture and start the mural.



Pictured: This is what the right side of the mural started to look like when we sketched the pictures onto the canvas.



Pictured: After some difficulty using the actual pictures, a basic line drawing of all of the pictures was created and then used by Pech to transfer the outline of the line drawing onto the canvas.



Pictured: After transferring the pictures onto the mural, we began making a more prominent outline with black paint as a basic guideline of where the colored paint would go.

Below: After outlining majority of the canvas we started, in the words of our visiting artist Carmelo Ortiz, “killing the canvas,” which basically entails painting a basic background color for each individual part of the mural. Just as there is a series of pictures of us priming the canvas, here is a series of pictures of us “killing it.”



Pictured: Natasha Morrison



Pictured: Aneisha Ezell, Jenna Steger, Nasharilys Torres, DeAndre Vaden.



Pictured: With Carmelo's help, we learned how to paint lilacs which is representative of the lilac festival that takes place every year, and people travel here from all over the world for it.



Pictured: Jenna Steger



Pictured Left: Aneisha Ezell, Makeba Monroe, and Heather Puente continue to kill the canvas, each trying to work on a different part of the mural so that we could finish” killing it.”



Pictured Right: These are the basic colors that we started out with while we were painting the mural.



Pictured: Makeba Monroe, Lynh Nguyen, and Pech Punleu Chhun. We continue “to kill the canvas” and, little by little, we fill up the blank space.



Pictured: Lynh Nguyen



Pictured: Makeba Monroe



Pictured: Finishing "killing the Canvas"



Pictured: Kaleb Chitaphong



Pictured: Pech Chhun, Kaleb Chitaphong, Suzanne Curtice, Biiftu Duresso, Natasha Morrison, and Carmelo Ortiz. Mr.Mel likes to occasionally have us step back and look at the full picture.

On Wednesday June 4th, MJ Iuppa, Ayana McCuller, and Jenna Steger began brainstorming using the same techniques used for creating the poem, “Study of Life of Action.” While we were brainstorming cinquains, Ayana had a creative impulse, and composed the following poem:

An unprescribed path to our future
Close-knit and deftly pure
Placed side by side with wooden sutures
Hung in the middle, a creative footprint— assured

~Ayana McCuller, Class of 2015

We hope that this poem will be featured on the mural’s plaque.

On Wednesday, June 10th, 2015, “A World of Our Own” is nearly finished. Students are beginning to shade figures and objects.

Today, our Teaching Artist, Carmelo “Mr. Mel” Ortiz is working with us on how to assess the mural as we enter the final stage of process. The final stage is “How to Read” the mural. Mr. Mel advises us to stand back from the mural and determine what is working and not working in the mural. Our critique depends upon our understanding of mural’s light source: the light and dark values give the mural its “life.” We are aware, through our art class instruction and working with Mr. Mel, that the light and dark values allow our viewers to see the mural’s narrative through its landscape, objects and figures.

From the seats in the auditorium, we were able to see the mural’s canvases at a distance. We began our critique of what we like and what we needed to improve, with Mr. Mel listening closely to our discussion.

“Current objects and figure with shading are “reading” well. Landscape grass needs texture. The ‘red’ shoelaces on figure that’s reading under tree has to be changed to a different color. The shoes on the figure that’s sitting on the bench has to have some color. The river has to have reflection,” and so on.

Once we determined the next steps in the final stage, students were assigned their tasks. Everyone was in agreement with the final work schedule.

By next week, “A World of Our Own” will be ready to be installed in the Joseph C. Wilson Magnet HS auditorium, in between the Carl W. Peters’ “Pioneer Family” and “Indian Group.”