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Schools

Contemporary art courses keep creative juices flowing

** Wexner Center summer classes for teens focus on stop-motion animation, Photoshop, video games and graphic novels, among other modern forms of art.*

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By **KHALILA PERRIN**

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Art can be as lasting as the Mona Lisa or as fleeting as petals strewn across a stone in a stream.

At least that's what Upper Arlington resident and sculptor Nicole Gibbs hopes to convey to her class of teen artists next month at the Wexner Center for the Arts.

Through her class called Environmental, she aims to get teens thinking not just outside the box, but outside the walls of where art is typically created.

Gibbs workshop is just one of seven available classes the Wexner Center for the Arts available this week through Aug. 14 as a part of Teen Fusion -- a series of weeklong workshops for teens exploring their interests in contemporary art forms.

The classes mean parents seeking last-minute camp ideas still have opportunities to tap into teens' creative side over summer break.

Gibbs' workshop will focus on recycling and repurposing everything from garbage to leaves and branches into pieces of outdoor art. It's as much about developing an art portfolio for teens who want to pursue art degrees as it is about having fun with art that exists only in the moment, she said.

"It's a cross between performance art and ephemeral art," said the Ohio State University graduate sculpture student.

Gibbs developed the class out of her own passion for art, hiking and bird-watching.

Students will focus on how to pull together natural elements and where within Ohio State University's Chadwick Arboretum to stage their pieces.

The class takes place from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. July 6-10 at the arboretum.

Teen Fusion instructors such as Gibbs not only share a love of art but a penchant for teaching, too, said Jean Pitman, the Wexner Center's educator for youth programs.

"Not all artists make great teachers and we are very careful to select only those who truly experience a calling and are trained to teach. Half of our artist educators are seasoned adult professionals and half are graduate or PhD candidates at OSU in theater, architecture, art, art education and dance," she said in an e-mail.

This year's Teen Fusion workshops, which allow about 14 students per class, include:

*iMovie + Clay/Media, June 22-26, which focuses on stop-action video animation using clay and mixed media;

*Just Photoshop, July 6-10, which aims to sharpen experienced Photoshop users and advanced digital photographers;

*Gibbs' workshop Environmental, July 6-10;

*Graphic Novels and Comics, July 13-17, which focuses on scriptwriting, penciling, inking, and lettering comics;

*Architecture and New Thinking: COOP HIMMELB(L)AU, July 20-24, which explores well-known architectural structures through real architectural problem-solving techniques, theories and practices;

*Documenting Your Extreme Life, July 20-24, which focuses on representing skate and surf culture visually; and

*Make Video Games: Advanced, Aug. 3-14, which focuses on game design.

The series ends with Fusion Fest 2009, a showcase of students' work.

Classes cost \$75 per week per student for center members and \$90 for nonmembers.

Registration fees include materials and equipment. A limited number of need-based scholarships are available. Applications are available at the Web site wexarts.org

While each Teen Fusion workshop lasts just one week, Gibbs said she's looking forward to seeing how the teens' thinking and approach to art evolves.

"Questioning and asking, 'What if?' is one of the most liberating acts you can make," she said. "I'm really excited to see if I can help open that up to them."

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