

Art in NELA's Schools

Imagine Studio Enables Children to Create and Display Art

by Lauren Grau

Imagine Studio, the after-school arts program developed and run by the Center for the Arts Eagle Rock (CFAER), will begin its seventh year this month, serving children in 17 elementary and middle schools in Northeast Los Angeles.

The 2017 program comes on the heels of last year's path breaking program, which culminated with the *Little Masters* exhibit at CFAER from December 9 to January 3.

Curated by a team of CFAER staff members and Imagine Studio teachers led by Melinda Ann Farrell, Executive Director of CFAER, the exhibit gathered and displayed the art created by students who participated in Imagine Studio workshops during the year. "I wanted the students to know they can become the next generation of wonderful artists, hence the name Little Masters," said Ms. Farrell. "You never know where the next Matisse, Diego Rivera or Picasso could come from. Why not, Northeast Los

Angeles?"

Today, the program offers workshops once a week for 10 weeks, mainly in NELA "Title 1" schools, which receive federal funding to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Contemporary artists serve as the teachers of each Imagine Studio workshop using mixed media, sculpture, painting, comic-book making and drawing to expand the participants' blossoming artistic abilities.

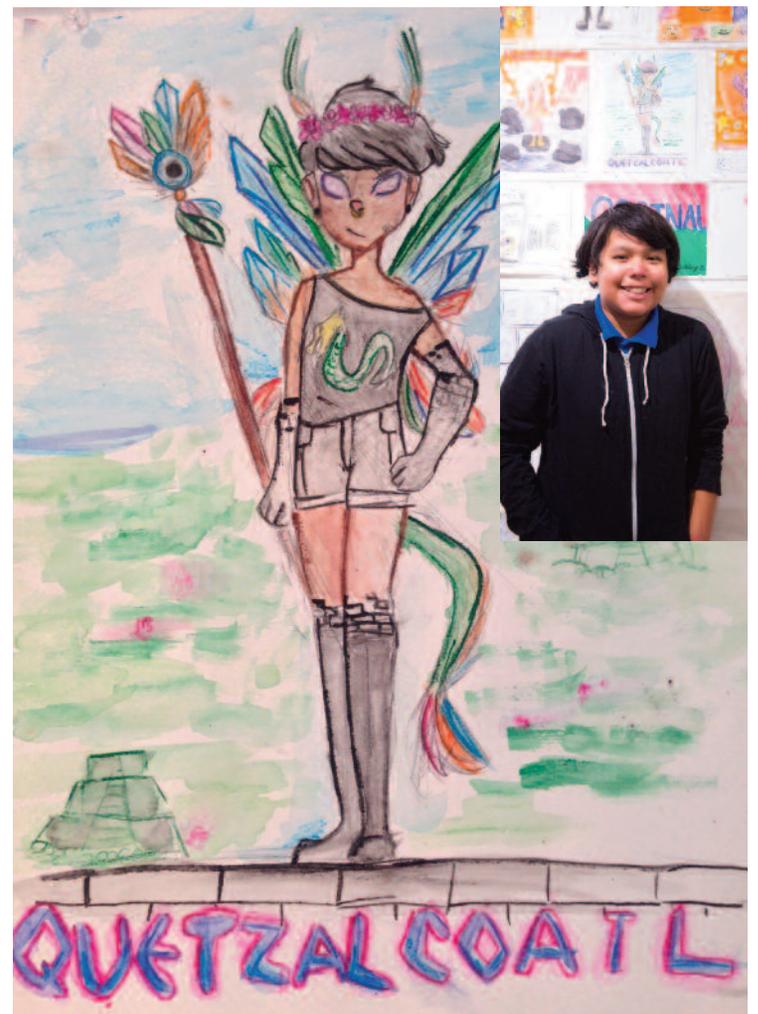
At Luther Burbank Middle School in Highland Park, where CFAER's Ismael de Anda, III taught an Imagine Studio workshop last year, one of the most popular assignments was to create a superhero based on 10 unique personal traits. The assignment was grounded in Mr. de Anda's own experience of art as a child, when he "used" art to draw out and express his emotions. The children clearly understood where Mr. de Anda was coming from. After the workshop ended, they kept

their own version of Imagine Studio going at their school.

Mr. de Anda says that Imagine Studio taps creativity, builds confidence and helps students to think conceptually and solve problems. By adding the *Little Masters* exhibit to the program, the effort becomes an even more encompassing artistic exercise, he says. The children benefit by coming together with students from different classes and empathizing over their artistic experiences. Parents benefit, he says, because they see the "power of art" in their children's finished pieces shown publicly.

At Monte Vista Elementary School in Highland Park, Principal Megan H. Guerrero says that Imagine Studio is "invaluable," because families do not have resources to sign up for off-campus, after school enrichment programs. Once exposed to art, the teaching and learning takes on a life of its own: At Monte Vista Elementary, fourth graders who participated in Imagine

Studio began using their recess breaks to teach younger students what they had learned.



Little Master, Genesis Santos (inset) standing in front of her art project, with a close up of her artwork in the foreground.

Imagine Studio: Create. Display. Repeat.

Imagine Studio workshops for 2017 take place in the Winter and Spring semesters, with the *Little Masters* exhibit taking place near the end of the year. Winter workshops are already at capacity. CFAER works closely with participating schools to determine which age groups would benefit most from the program. Ages typically range from six to 14. Parents should check with the school's main office for sign-up information.

The participating schools are: Aldama Elementary School, Annandale Elementary School, Arroyo Seco Elementary School, Buchanan Street Elementary School, Bushnell Way Elementary School, Dahlia Heights Elementary School, Delevan Drive Elementary School, Eagle Rock Elementary School, Fletcher Drive Elementary School, Garvanza Elementary School, Glassell Park Elementary School, Latona Elementary School, Luther Burbank Middle School, Monte Vista Street Elementary School, Rockdale Elementary School, San Pascual Avenue Elementary School and Toland Way Elementary School.

Imagine Studio workshops are offered free of charge because of generous grants from California Arts Council, Kiwanis Foundation of Eagle Rock, Dwight Stuart Youth Fund, The Green Foundation, Los Angeles County Department of Cultural Affairs, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation and Eric and Karen Warren. Donations can also be made on the CFAER website along with the opportunity to purchase postcards of the students Imagine Studio work for \$35. The Little Masters, past, present and future, will thank you.

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