

# GOINGS-ON:

THE ART ROOM IN ACTION

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for lesson details,  
student work,  
and more

## Hello!

**S**tudent? Parent? Administrator? Welcome, one and all, to the World of **ART**. Here, you'll get a taste of what's cooking in Mr. Minichiello's class. This portfolio features a general overview of my teaching philosophy, course procedures, project highlights, resources for making art outside of the art room, and much more.

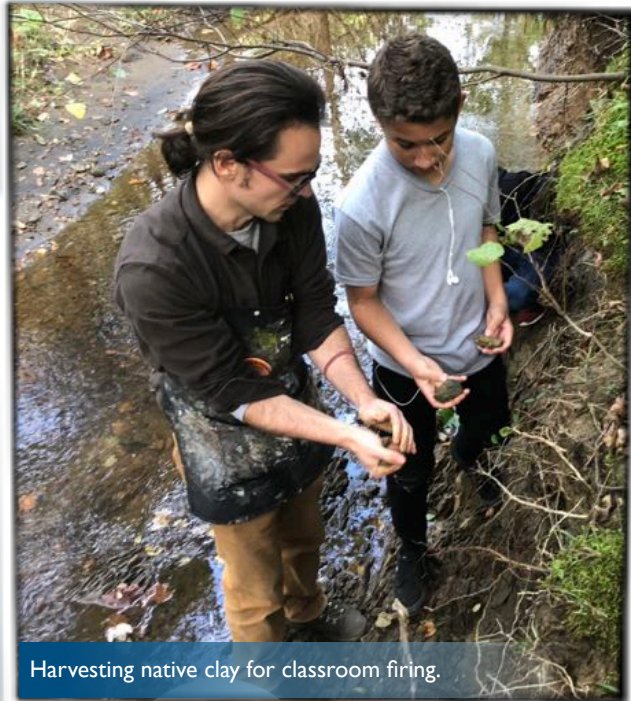
“THE MORE YOU LEARN,  
THE MORE YOU LEARN,  
THERE'S MORE TO LEARN”

~ Mr. M

## ABOUT MR. MINICHELLO...

You know the type of kid who's always been painfully shy? The quiet one with a loud imagination? Are you/were you that kid? I was. I loved my classes, but the social aspects of school were always very stressful. When I began studying to become a teacher, I was motivated by my passion for art. I was less confident about how I could lead and inspire those I taught. I figured that my passion for the content, even more so than my relationships with students, would fuel my ambition.

More than a decade later, I've discovered that just the opposite is true. Teaching has strengthened my empathy, patience, and resolve in ways that I scarcely could've imagined. I now realize that these are the aspects of teaching that matter most. When asked how to live a meaningful life, author Joseph Campbell famously advised, "Follow your bliss." Years later, concerned with the misapplication of his message, he purportedly said, "I should have said 'follow your blisters.'" I thought I was following my bliss into teaching, but first found my blisters—and I'm forever grateful.



Harvesting native clay for classroom firing.



'17/'18 Art Club end-of-year party.

## MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My teaching philosophy is an interdisciplinary one, and I find the arts especially well-suited to this type of instruction. Visual arts encompasses both the conceptual and the technical, the historical and the yet-to-be-determined. This duality fosters a dynamic learning environment unique to the art room. Here, students have the freedom to express their own ideas while always finding new ways to work with media, studying precedents, thinking critically, and incorporating cultural aspects both broad and specific.

Art instruction is by essence a tricky proposition. Free expression vs. practiced technique, precedent building vs. precedent destruction, concept vs. object - the paradoxes go on. Over time, art teachers may hunker down as either rigid structuralists or postmodern relativists. I favor a balance customized to the teaching context. It's been my experience that uninspired and unexamined instruction bores or stresses students, while inspired yet inconsistent instruction leaves them cynical and listless. My goal is to strive for that ideal medium in which there is no distinction between "what is required" and "what is interesting."



# COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

**Art 7** is a semester-long course designed to build upon and expand beyond the exploratory theme of Art 6. Students are introduced to new mediums (acrylic painting, paper sculpture) and techniques/concepts (pointillism, Op art). A month-long unit on Japanese art includes Sumi painting and printmaking, along with a study of wabi-sabi aesthetics and animation.

## PROJECTS:

“Notan Squares” (cut paper)  
“Sumi Painting” (ink)  
“Printed Kanji” (printmaking)  
“Pointillism” (drawing)  
“‘Stygz’ Animations (stage I)” (animation)  
“Themed Pocket Vases” (clay)  
“Monochromatic Landscapes” (acrylic)  
“Collage Portraits” (paper collage)  
“Ancient Greek Vessels” (sculpture)

Stygz animations will be submitted and shown as a mini **FILM FEST** at the end of each semester. All are welcome to join the audience and vote for favorites!

In **Art 8**, students continue to work with new materials and hone technical skills while investigating deeper modes of criticism and analysis. Interdisciplinary projects are emphasized to highlight arts integration into other content areas. Students begin synthesizing formerly stand-alone elements like two-point perspective, value gradients, and color theory into original artworks.

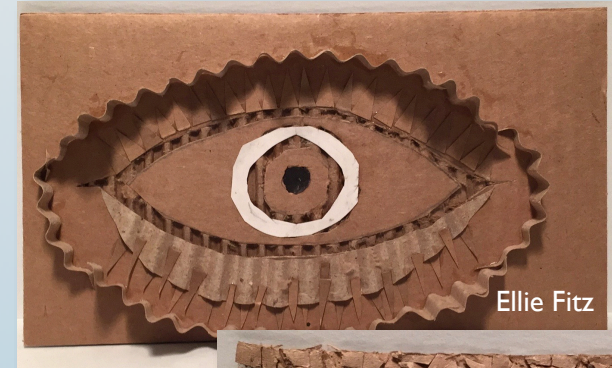
## PROJECTS:

“Fantasy Cities” (perspective drawing/painting)  
“Exposed Coil Sculpture” (clay)  
“‘Stygz’ Animations” (stage II)” (digital animation)  
“Contour and Gesture Drawing” (drawing)  
“Mandalas” (drawing/painting)  
“Caricature Intro” (drawing)  
“Abstract Nylon Sculpture” (wire sculpture)  
“Eyes in Relief” (cardboard sculpture)  
“Hats from Scratch” (cardboard sculpture)

3-6 student artworks will be selected from each project to be shown in our **ARTS FESTIVAL** in the spring!

## GALLERY

Featured here are 8th-graders’ **Eyes in Cardboard Relief**. These sculptures stretch students’ *conceptual* (“How creative can I get within the theme of ‘eyes’?”) and *technical* (“How many planes and textures can I create using cardboard alone?”) skills.



Ellie Fitz



Jamie Heidecker



Shawn Ortiz

# “THE NITTY-GRITTY”: Grading and Procedures

## ASSESSMENT

Students will be assessed using the “total points” system, whereby all earned points will be divided by all possible points without weighting. Breakdown is as follows:

- 1.) Major Projects (4 per semester): 100 pts.
- 2.) Mini Projects (4-5 per semester): 75 pts.
- 3.) Participation Days (3-5 per semester): 15 pts.
- 3.) Warm-ups, assignments (variable, at least two per week): 5-20 pts.

While each project will be graded using a customized rubric, the following criteria will form the backbone of general assessment:

- 1.) **Craft** - Does the project show evidence of the skills developed through this specific lesson? (30%)
- 2.) **Concept** - Did the student show an understanding of the essential concept(s) of the project? (30%)
- 3.) **Classroom Behavior** - Did the student use their time valuably in the classroom? (20%)
- 4.) **Materials Management** - Did the student handle class materials with respect? (20%)

Please note that **grading is NOT based on prior experience or inherent skill**. If the student shows effort, respects materials and his/her peers, and completes work on time, that student will do well.

## RULES

By middle school we all know the basics about how to behave in the classroom and long rule lists should not be necessary. Here is what matters most in Mr. M's room:

- 1.) **Be on time and seated** after you enter the room.
- 2.) **Keep those pencils handy** - I run out of extras quickly!
- 3.) **Respect all Materials** - do not destroy or waste art supplies. Return them to their proper place.
- 4.) **DO NOT STEAL. DO NOT MARK OTHER STUDENTS' WORK.**
- 5.) **Keep track of your work** - Many students use the art room and it's easy to lose supplies.
- 6.) **Electronic Device use is at teacher's discretion ONLY**

## DISCIPLINE

Hopefully this is the first and last time you'll have to read this! The art room is a place where students exercise the freedom to stretch their creative capacities, challenge themselves and others, and push boundaries they might not be able to in other classes. That said, **EVERYONE** in the art room should be respected. Here is how Mr. M handles discipline:

- 1.) **Verbal warning (2x)**
- 2.) **Home contact (phone call. Email as last resort)**
- 3.) **Administrative referral**

Please review our school's code of conduct for further details. The procedures above are apply only to the art room.




# “HEAR YE!”: Announcements

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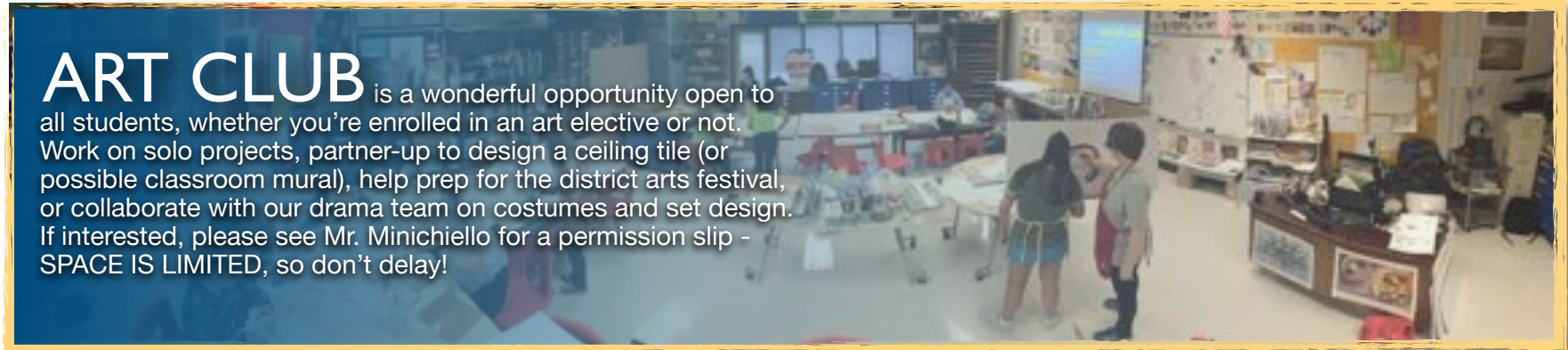
## SUPPLIES REMINDER

I like to keep required supplies to a minimum—the **only ones every student will need are #2 pencils**. However, I always appreciate the following if you're able to provide them! Extra supplies and donations will be made available to all class members.

- 
- 1.) 5-10 #2 PENCILS TO STORE IN THE ART ROOM
  - 2.) Handheld eraser
  - 3.) Glue stick
  - 4.) Colored pencils (8 or 12-pack)
  - 5.) 7"x10" sketchbook

2

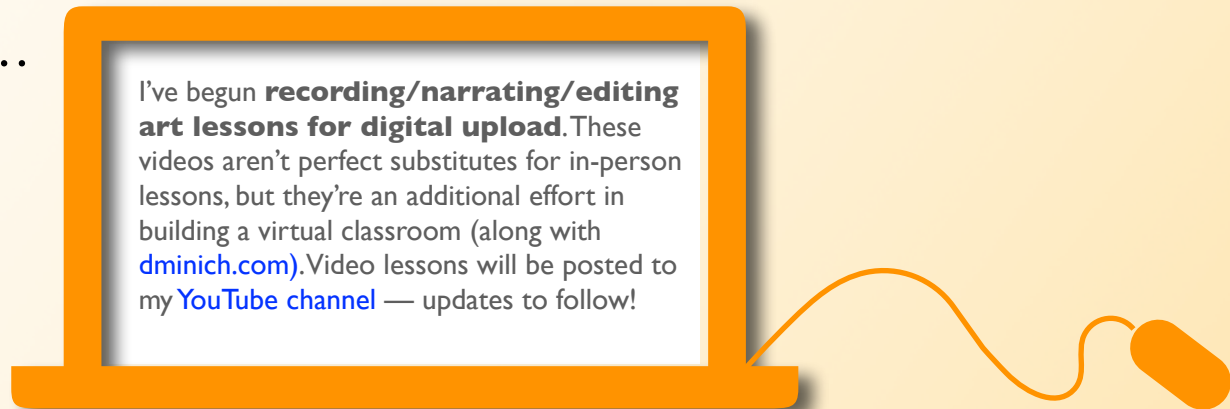
**ART CLUB** is a wonderful opportunity open to all students, whether you're enrolled in an art elective or not. Work on solo projects, partner-up to design a ceiling tile (or possible classroom mural), help prep for the district arts festival, or collaborate with our drama team on costumes and set design. If interested, please see Mr. Minichiello for a permission slip - SPACE IS LIMITED, so don't delay!



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## COMING SOON...

I've begun **recording/narrating/editing art lessons for digital upload**. These videos aren't perfect substitutes for in-person lessons, but they're an additional effort in building a virtual classroom (along with [dminich.com](http://dminich.com)). Video lessons will be posted to my [YouTube channel](#) — updates to follow!



# ART 6 : HIGHLIGHTS



## COLORSCAPES

After studying **atmospheric perspective** and **color theory** separately, students combine them to create dynamic paper and acrylic mosaics. This mixed-media format challenges students to use unusual color and texture combinations—a step-up from “broccoli trees”! *Landscape approaches of Hockney, O’Keefe, and Friedrich are contrasted.*



## GOTHIC GARGOYLES

A unit on medieval art culminates with a study of European cathedrals and associated gargoyles. This serves as inspiration to sketch, sculpt, and glaze original fantasy creatures. Prior lessons on **facial proportion** and **expression** aid in creature creation. *Incorporates Macauley’s “Cathedral”.*



## BURNISHED NAMEPLATES

**Relief sculpture** takes the fore as students build tin nameplates backed with tagboard. **Graphic design** and **associated elements and principles** are studied prior to construction. A subtractive sanding technique adds a rustic patina, following a lesson on the unusual beauty of iron oxidation. *Brief allusions to El Anatsui and Penny Hardy.*



## NIERIKAS

A study of **Huichol yarn-painting** guides this unusual textile lesson. Students **wind, weave, and loop** yarn onto corrugated cardboard, filling in a previously sketched scene or symbol. Great patience and dexterity is required for these 4”x5” vignettes. The result is a visual and textural “pop” impossible to reproduce in other mediums.







## ONE-POINT PERSPECTIVE INTERIORS

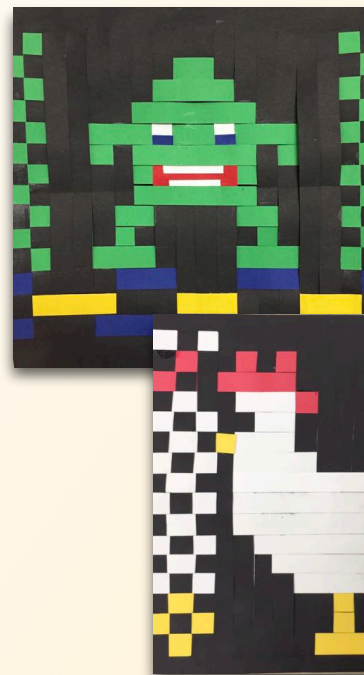
Students explore the fascinating—and sometimes frustrating—world of **perspective drawing**. Following lessons grappling with **vanishing points** and **orthogonals**, they let their imaginations take the reins and create their own ideal bedrooms. Drawings are inked and watercolored to capture subtle gradient shifts.



## CUBIST HANDS

Students dive into the history and philosophy of **Cubism**. It's a heavy lift at first, but worth it! **Representationalism** meets **abstraction** in the final drawing. Precedence is on **value** and **composition**.

*Picasso and Braque studied at introduction.*



## WOVEN PIXEL CREATURES

**Traditional craftwork** and **digital aesthetics** collide in this paper weaving project.

Following a lesson connecting the visual logic of reed weaving to raster graphics, students **warp-and-weft** their way to creating original “sprites”. The result is a contemporary-looking project crafted through ancient means.





# ART 7 : HIGHLIGHTS

## MYTHIC SCULPTURE

This project is a collaboration between the Language Arts and Visual Art departments. Students studying Greek mythology, archetypes, and “the hero’s journey” design a motif based on the material within the unit that resonates with them.

Work then begins on planning a 3-D vessel (preceded by a lesson on Greek pottery). Construction using plastic, cardboard, and

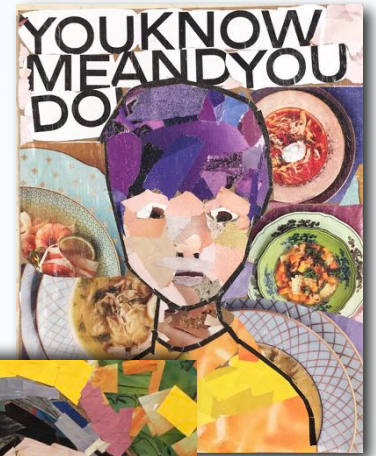
paper maché follows. Finally, the original graphic motif is added in acrylic. This is a lengthy, multi-stage project that has it all—drawing, painting, paper maché, and sculpture!



## COLLAGE PORTRAITS

Students review and build upon **facial proportion and expression** lessons from 6th grade, then shift to an exploration of the important (though oft ignored) role of **lighting dynamics**.

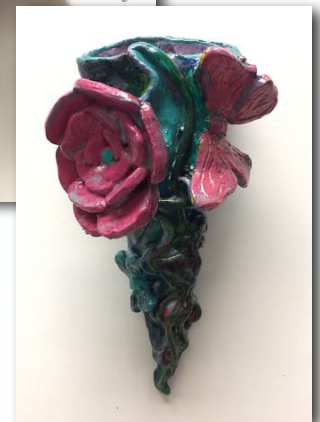
**Collage** requires students to use a sculptural approach to rendering the face using **highlight** and **shadow**, and stretches them beyond making flat representations lacking contrast.



## THEMED POCKET VASES

Students explore **form** and **function** in this ambitious ceramics project.

Theme is open-ended, though the final piece must incorporate **three clay handling techniques** AND serve as a functional vessel. This project covers **slab rolling, coiling, carving, fettling, glazing** and more.





# THE ART OF JAPAN

## PRINTED KANJI

A lesson exploring the history of **Japanese woodblock printing**—and its influence on contemporary **anime aesthetics**—guide this portion of the unit. *Hiroshige and Hokusai studied and referenced throughout.*

**Kanji** is introduced and the connection between **poetry** and **visual art** in **Ukiyo** is established. Students create their own kanji messages, then **carve** and **print** onto banners. *Brief study of the art of lacquerware follows.*



## SUMI PAINTING

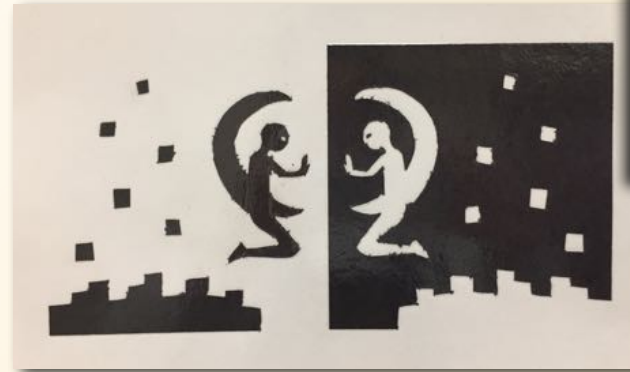
A **single brush. Ink. Paper.** Sounds simple, right? Sumi painting is anything but! Students practice letting their instincts and the medium itself guide them in these large, quickly-executed works. Days of practice precede the final painting, as students experiment with a range of brush techniques such as **rolling, printing, and splaying.**

*Chinese landscape paintings, forerunners of Sumi, are studied at intro.*



## NOTAN SQUARES

The power of **negative space** is captured through the concept of *Notan*, roughly translated as “lightness and darkness”. Students draw, cut, and reflect designs without wasting a single scrap. An intro to the **wabi-sabi** aesthetic guides this project and subsequent ones in the unit.



# ART 8 : HIGHLIGHTS

## ABSTRACT NYLON SCULPTURE

What is the role of **abstraction** in art? How do we express **concepts non-representationally**? Students, perhaps for the first time, are challenged to **express a feeling** using the basic principle of design alone.

*The sculptures of Henry Moore serve as introduction in moving from representationalism into abstraction.*



## EXPOSED COIL SCULPTURE

A technically-focused ceramics project designed to spark creativity within a small set of parameters:

- 1.) Vessels must achieve height (5"-8") through **coiling**.
- 2.) Vessels must be **scored/slipped** well enough to survive the "inversion test".

Vessels are finished with a transparent glaze, allowing the **texture** and **form of construction** precedence over color.

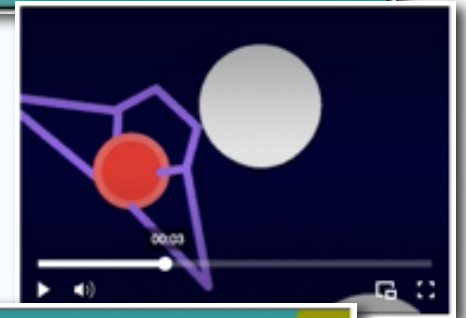
*Jomon pottery used as intro reference.*



## STYKZ Animations

A deep-dive into the history of animation—from cave paintings to zoetropes to claymation to CGI—opens this lesson. Students are then introduced to **Stykz**, a freeware animation application, in order to create short films from scratch.

**Every object, motion, and modification in each frame is built one click at-a-time. The result is a "digital flip book"!**







## FANTASY CITIES

Students use **two-point-perspective** to create an illusion of exterior depth, moving beyond the simpler **one-point perspective** of sixth grade. After drafting basic geometric shapes, students incorporate imaginative themes to create a unique world of their own. Final drawings are outlined with fine-line marker, then finished with colored pencil and/or watercolors.

*Intro lessons include broad overview of artistic developments during the Renaissance.*



## HATS FROM SCRATCH

**What message do you convey to the world through what tops your skull?** Students probe the fascinating world of couture, military, religious, and political headgear. They then brainstorm options of their own in 2-D. 3-D construction sees them engineer corrugated cardboard, paper maché, and acrylic paint into a whole that must be **light** and **functional**.

*Hip-hop cap culture explored in intro.*

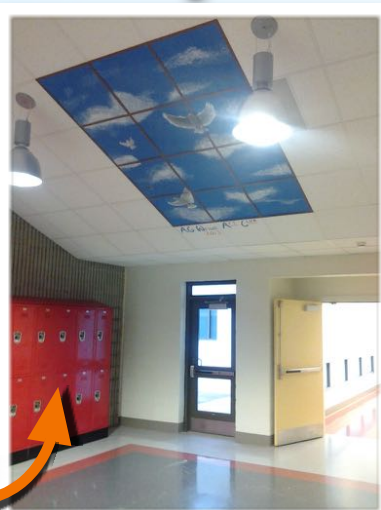




# ART CLUB : HIGHLIGHTS



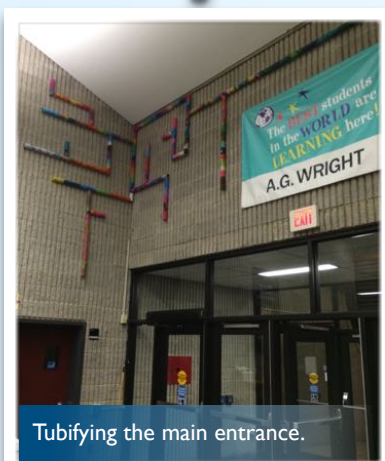
Creating a "skylight" for the central lobby.



Props for Drama department musical.



Designing a backdrop for WTGR morning announcements.



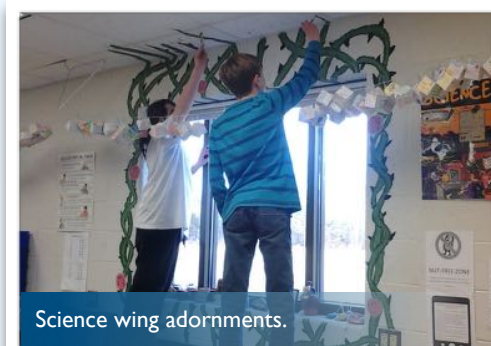
Tubifying the main entrance.



A sample teacher-commissioned ceiling tile.



A cherry blossom for Mrs. Tryon.



Science wing adornments.



Gym murals.





# ART outside of the ART ROOM

Art wasn't born in a classroom, nor does it only reside there, or in museums, or in textbooks. Art is a process unfolding around and within us—we only need allow ourselves a bit of imagination to recognize and foster it. Fortunately, opportunities abound for creative exploration at home now more than ever. Here are some resources designed to bring art into your home and community:

## **GROUP ACTIVITIES:**

*I've tinkered with a lot of group drawing games with my students—here are a couple that transfer seamlessly from classroom to home.*

### Collaboface

Inspired by the Dadaists' "exquisite corpse" exercise. Very simple: draw the outline of a face, then pass to a family member/friend. S/he adds one feature, then passes it on and the process continues. Experiment with rules/guidelines of your own. A great way to bond across generations. Ages 6+

### Whiteboard Charades

A twist on the classic drawing game I developed for use in and out of the classroom. This works for best with groups of 6-12 people. Picture Pictionary™, but with a central word generator and 3-4 drawing groups. Gameplay details omitted here for brevity—contact me if interested! Ages 10+

## **WEBSITES:**

*Click the hyperlink to access; try another browser if you encounter technical problems.*

### • [SculptGL](#)

A 3-D sculpting CAD program with incredible creative potential. The interface is a bit confusing, but once you get the hang of it the possibilities are limitless! Ages 12+

### • [Piskel](#)

A wonderful introduction to basic animation. An intuitive interface allows children to create an original "sprite" and set it to motion. Ages 8+

### • [Harmony](#)

Don't be fooled! The bare-bones design of this drawing program allows for startlingly elegant productions. Ages 6+

### • [Slimber](#)

A great drawing platform for beginners. Use the "▷" button at the bottom to replay the creation of your piece or discover how someone else created theirs. Ages 6+

## **SOFTWARE:**

*Click the hyperlink to download the program; all are MAC/PC compatible and FREE!*

### • [Styky](#)

You don't need to be a technical whiz to create simple animations with Styky. Think of it as a "digital flip-book. Ages 10+

### • [GIMP](#)

A classic! GIMP is an all-purpose graphic design program—use it for photo editing, collage, and drawing. Ages 10+

### • [Inkscape](#)

A vector graphics editor with a user-friendly interface and wide variety of tools. If GIMP is akin to a freeware version of Adobe Photoshop, Inkscape is akin to Adobe Illustrator. Ages 10+

