

Gadsden campers look to the Futurists

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For the past four years, McKenzie Shiver has looked forward to summer camp at the Gadsden Arts Center & Museum. "It helps you learn things you didn't know could be possible. Every year I come here and it inspires me more. Every year there's new stuff," said the 10-year-old.

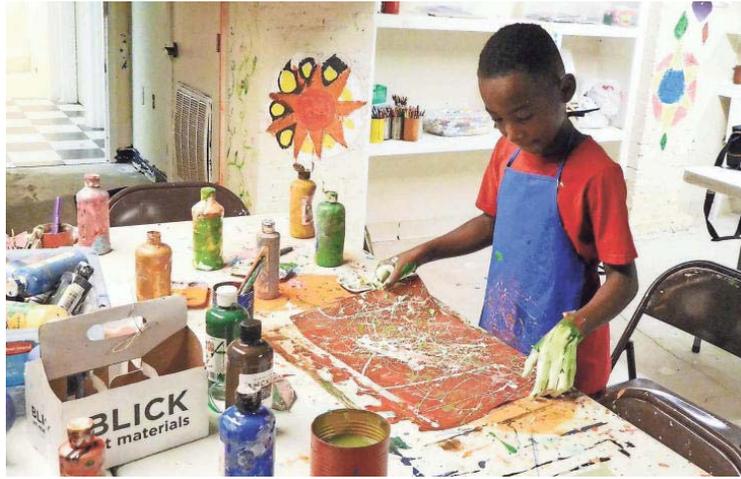
Variety is part of the plan for Gadsden Arts Education Director Anissa Ford. With six themed, weeklong camps, she encourages participants to broaden their own definition of art. "Showing our campers that art can be anything" is one of Ford's biggest goals. "Art is symbolic, it's weird, it's magical, it's storytelling and it's collaboration."

This year, the second week of camp focused on the intersection of motion and sound with visual art. In an ingenious convergence with endless opportunities, camp instructors developed a wide diversity of activities including a conversation about an often-overlooked art movement.

Gadsden Arts education intern Victoria DeBlasio said, "Unless you're an art historian, Futurism is not something that comes up because it got a little lost in the transition to contemporary art." The Futurism movement emerged in Italy in the early 20th century and it emphasized "speed and how technology is constantly moving and changing."

After showing examples of Futurist works, DeBlasio challenged campers to create their own interpretations. Nine-year-old Ariel Chandler chose to depict a soaring skateboarder and she added colors that reinforced the motion of her imagery. "The red paint is for the skater to go fast and the yellow paint is for calm skating." Like McKenzie, Ariel has been coming to Gadsden Arts' summer camps for many years, and one of her favorite parts of being in the space is the ability to tour the museum's exhibitions.

For Ford, this is an important part of the campers' experience, and she recognizes it's a part of a learning continuum. "We've done lessons based on our permanent collection and based on what is on display in the galleries. It's that first step for lifelong museum



PJ Moye created a painting inspired by Jackson Pollock.

goers. Get them here enjoying making art and then eventually they come to the galleries and they enjoying looking at art too."

Campers have no trouble enjoying the art making process, especially when they're taking inspiration from Jackson Pollock.

Seven-year-old Priya Patel said that "he rubbed paint all around his canvas and he splattered art everywhere." Across the table, PJ Moye, 6, was doing his best Pollock impression and described his movements. "I'm making a painting by splashing paint off of my hands. It flicks on the paper and drips," he said. Contemplating the message of Pollock's work, 6-year-old Zoe Chandler said, "He was trying to say he loves art." In a whisper, she added, "I love art. I want to be an artist."

Campers also explored motion and sound through the work of contemporary performance artist Nick Cave. In the 1990s Cave began creating "sound suits." These wearable, sculptural assemblages of found objects and mixed media swish, rattle and clatter when the wearer moves.

Instructor Maddie Hart showed campers a video of the sound suits in



action to mixed reviews. "At first, everyone thought they were scary and ugly and weird, but they turned out to really like them" and they jumped at the chance to make their own. Hart said, "We're using black T-shirts and black shorts and we're attaching all sorts of fabrics and beads. We painted them and when they're done, we're going to play music and dance in them."

Both Hart and DeBlasio are art history students at Florida State University, and Hart said "it's been inspiring seeing the kids painting, just how in touch they are with it and how interested they are is really cool. They're so honest and have so many great ideas." DeBlasio had similar sentiments and said, "This camp lets them explore. It opens them up and makes them not afraid to make bold choices and keep their individuality."

This is much needed because as



Victoria DeBlasio works with campers to create artworks inspired by Futurism.

Ford pointed out, "In Gadsden County, most students don't get to have that weekly engagement with the arts in school. Some campers are with us all summer so that's six weeks, three hours a day, that they get to look at, talk about and make art. It's also multidisciplinary. We partner with The Quincy Music Theatre and a lot of our campers go to theater camp too."

Nearly half of the campers at Gadsden Arts receive a scholarship which allows for more children to have access to their summer programming. They also offer a spring break camp and plans are underway for a new walk-in art studio and children's gallery. This project will provide even more opportunities for the community to create together and explore the wide world of art and the countless forms it can take.

Find more details about the Gadsden Arts Center & Museum's remaining summer camps and many others at www.TallahasseeArts.org

Amanda Kariooth Thompson is the assistant director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture.