



SCHOOL & FAMILY

Campers work on a still life drawing at Teen Foundation camp at LeMoyné Center for Visual Arts.

PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON

VISUAL VOCABULARY

TEEN DREAMS TAKE ROOT AT LEMOYNE ART CAMP

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Teens usually spend the summer months hanging out with friends, working at temporary jobs, or conscripted into baby-sitting younger siblings, but many local teenagers find more creative ways to spend their school break.

The LeMoyné Center for Visual Arts offers summer camps for kids of all ages, and the Teen Foundation program is a popular option. Campers choose from five, two-week sections, each focused on a different period of art history.

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Austin Yorke shares insights with campers at LeMoyné.

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Education Coordinator Alexandra Ifland says that one of most unique aspects of the Teen Foundations program is the level of instruction that participants receive. "We have teachers who are graduate students and they teach at FSU. They take the curriculum that they're getting at a college level and bring it to teens at a high school level."

One of those instructors is Austin Yorke. As an MFA student at FSU, he recognizes the mutual benefit and believes that he has become a better university teacher because of his instructional experiences at LeMoyne. "LeMoyne's been a huge confidence booster for me. It makes the classes that I teach at FSU a lot more successful."

Yorke began seriously pursuing art in his early teens after he and his family endured a harrowing boating incident that tragically resulted in the loss of lives. "I would probably be an awful person had it not been for art. It gave me a space to really figure out how those traumas affected me. It also bridged the gap between personally healing and, in some small way, helping others who are experiencing something traumatic, through art." He was quick to add that "art can't replace therapy. You should go through therapy and do all the things you need to do to get well, but art throughout life can continuously help you get to that spot where you feel satisfied."

Individuals seek out art for a variety of reasons, and these campers are no exception. Yorke understands that, through this camp, they are developing more than artistic skills. Certainly, they gain knowledge of art history and a working appreciation of proportion and perspective, but much of what campers gain can't be shown on a canvas. "They're learning communication skills and the vocabulary of the visual world. What I can do for them is help them see. I can't make them artists. I can bring them to the precipice but it's their choice to step off into it."

Maddie Forrester, 13, was ready to take that step. As a veteran summer camper at LeMoyne, she had been eagerly



PHOTOS BY AMANDA THOMPSON

Campers are taught to use string to help with proportion.

awaiting the year when she could participate in the Teen Foundations program because she knew "there would be more complicated projects like oil painting, ceramics, and installations." Corinna Carroll, 15, was also excited to dedicate her focus to artmaking. She said, "Art is my way of self-expression. I always have things running through my brain and it's helpful for me to get things out there and release it."

Campers work on numerous projects using a variety of media and will go home with 8-10 completed works. As an important part of the creative process, campers engage in peer critiques which provide helpful insights and allow for greater artistic growth. Jada Gatlin, 15, welcomes the feedback. "Critiquing helped me out a lot. It's like the real world and it makes you stronger than you already are." Karly Zelznak, 15, agreed and shared that "when you're doing your art and other people see it, you're opening up in a way that isn't very common. By showing that part of yourself, you initiate this immediate trust with everyone else."

Zachary Grove, 16, had similar sentiments. Though his mother signed him up for the camp without his knowledge, he has enjoyed it. "It's been pretty fun, learning new techniques and meeting new people." He found some important lessons within the practice of thoughtful critique. "We learn how to compliment each other on our artworks and we help each other out. It helps later in life



A camper's charcoal still life drawing in progress



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to be more friendly with other people."

Yorke knows from personal experience that art can alleviate suffering, build connections, and amplify human kindness. It seems that these campers have come closer to that understanding themselves. "Art is a boundary dissolving tool. It helps us see ourselves as a collective society, of one world, rather than divided by political or state lines." Speaking about these teenagers, York added, "It's good for

them to understand that because so much of the rhetoric lately had been very separatist and very exclusionary. I think art is the literal cultural opposite of that kind of thing."

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