



# Brooklyn Daily Eagle

## Art

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### From the Classroom to the Gallery: Brooklyn Students Learn through Art

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BROOKLYN HEIGHTS -- From headquarters in the Clinton Street BRIC Rotunda Gallery, art collaborations of a most unusual kind are being forged between professional Brooklyn artists and the next generation.

Led by Director of Education Hawley Hussey, a dedicated resident of Coney Island, BRIC Contemporary Art's education program develops programming for Brooklyn public schools on a case by case basis.

The partnerships aim to address specific needs of the school, often related to enhancing the academic curriculum.

"We artists are always starting with questions," says Hussey. "Artists help teachers solve problems. 'Is there a way to measure learning through art?' Or, 'How can we connect test prep to the art residency curriculum?'"

At BRIC Rotunda Gallery, the non-profit visual art base of the extensive BRIC Arts | Media | Bklyn organization, Hussey and gallery staff occupy the upstairs offices, while contemporary exhibits rotate through the high-ceilinged gallery.

In the field, a BRIC artist teacher might work one or two days a week throughout the year in a given classroom. Or, in the case of the Juan Morel Campos School in Williamsburg, an extensive school-wide partnership has bloomed in the three years since BRIC helped turn an unused Campos classroom into an all-purpose student art lab. In keeping with the vision of community integration, the lab is also used as a research and development lab for educators.



From left to right are P.S. 119 students Kennedy Cooks, Monique Brown, Bryan Clarke and Niyamani Watson with Hawley Hussey, artist teacher and BRIC Contemporary Art director of education.

Hussey says BRIC builds relationships to last. “We don’t want to be quick partners. It creates something more meaningful for everyone. Nurturing all involved leads to sustainability.”

A recent exhibition at BRIC Rotunda Gallery called KidsArt, curated by Hussey, featured work made by six different Brooklyn schools — M.S. 136 in Sunset Park, Green School in East Williamsburg, P.S. 8 of Brooklyn Heights, Middle School for Art and Philosophy in Brownsville, Williamsburg’s Campos and P.S. 119, The Magnet School for Global and Ethical Studies.

“This is an education program of depth,” says Hussey. “This [show] is a yearly celebration of the program.”

KidsArt revealed the variety of work and depth of investigation facilitated by the artist teachers — from found object architecture (Middle School for Art and Philosophy) and environmental hallway murals (Green School) to diagramming presidential speeches (Campos) and reflecting the masters, Piet Mondrian, Alexander Calder, Romare Bearden (P.S. 8 pre-k).

“What these little ones can do and talk about is pretty much exceptional,” says Hussey of P.S. 8’s four-year-old artists. “We are not afraid to bring in major subject matter because they have so much support.”

### **Back in the Classroom**

This year was the first since she took an administrative position four years ago that Hussey re-entered the classroom as an artist teacher. One project she led at P.S. 119 — where the students are called “**peacebuilders**” — directly connected with the core ethical studies curriculum. The nationwide Fundred Dollar Bill project, in which each person creates their own interpretation of a hundred dollar bill, was conceived by artist Mel Chin to raise awareness and funding for a solution to lead-polluted soil in New Orleans. Hussey introduced the project to Lori Riveccio’s fifth grade class and then, as the country’s first “Student Fundred Operatives,” they taught the project to the rest of P.S. 119 and to adults at the Brooklyn Museum.

Students across the country are contributing to Chin’s goal of \$300 million Fundred Dollars, which will be picked up by an armored truck (fueled by cafeteria school vegetable oil) and delivered to Washington D.C. The Fundred Dollar Bill project is also now on display at Gallery The, at 343 Smith St.

A well-known defender of Coney Island — who moonlights as a mermaid and polar bear and is one of the founding members of the newest winter bathing club in Coney, The Brooklyn Penguins — Hussey has become deeply rooted in the community since moving to Brooklyn from L.A. in 2000. For her, teaching art to children is nearly indistinguishable from teaching children about their communities, both local and global. The other project she led this year was an exchange of Brooklyn, Cuban and Canadian students, whose artwork shares the theme of the environment and their role in protecting it. “We started thinking, ‘What’s my planetary responsibility?’” she explains. The students and artists met and talked through Skype, and the artwork traveled to each country with a final stop in Brooklyn.

Dozens of school groups visited during the show’s three-week run, and Hussey says the artists themselves were especially inspired to see their work displayed in an adult environment.

Long ago Hussey’s mother, an artist, used to say after an afternoon of art making together, “Hawley, it’s time to admire ourselves profusely!” Hussey has carried this sentiment of celebration to her own mentoring. She says her work this year back in the classroom rekindled her passion for teaching and learning.

“The more they see others empowered, the more they will feel they can be anything,” she says. “We want kids to know they can wear many hats, too, and understand how their work affects the community. We want them to say, ‘I trust my own thinking.’”

For more info about BRIC Rotunda Gallery, visit [www.briconline.org/rotunda](http://www.briconline.org/rotunda). For Gallery The, visit [www.gallerythe.org](http://www.gallerythe.org).