

RELIANCE MATRIX FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER



The Reliance Matrix Foundation partners with cultural institutions to provide immersive programs in visual arts, dance, STEM, and career exploration for students throughout the Philadelphia region.

For nearly thirty years, the Foundation has supported the Philadelphia Art Museum's teen programs, which broaden access to the arts, promote cultural expression, strengthen critical thinking, and build self-confidence.

Through these programs teens create original artwork inspired by the museum's collection, collaborate with professional artists, experiment with diverse artistic techniques, and explore potential careers in the arts. Designed to ignite creativity, curiosity, and personal growth, the programs use visual arts as a powerful tool for discovery and

achievement. To ensure broad access, the museum provides all necessary art supplies, covers transportation via SEPTA passes, and offers engaging, culturally relevant learning experiences both in and beyond the classroom.



The museum's Teen Programs are generously supported by Reliance Matrix Foundation.

Above: Students from Teen Sketch creating screenprints in the museum studio



TEEN SKETCH

Teen Sketch is a program for high school students who have a passion for the visual arts. Each week students meet in-person or online to discuss and create art through drawing, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture, and more. Led by teaching artists Aki Torii and Andrew Christman, students are challenged to consider contemporary ideas, experiment with art-making techniques, share their personal work and support one another in actively working to build a creative community. This year focused on art making, fostering an appreciation for art, and developing tools for academic gallery discussions.

This fiscal year transitioned Teen Sketch into a split hybrid program, with four home studio days and four gallery work days each semester. This allowed students to take inspiration from the museum and receive direct instruction while in-person that informed their self-directed practice at home. Meeting in-person allowed students after-hours access and art-making opportunities in the museum studios that helped them form stronger connections to their peers, their instructors, and the collection.

Students in Teen Sketch broadened their experience with different materials and techniques while expanding their craft and understanding of portraiture. Inspired by the vibrant introspection of the works included in *The Time Is Always Now: Artists Reframe the Black Figure*, students layered collage materials over black-and-white photographs, reflecting their colorful inner worlds. Students developed their drawing skills, creating master studies in front of a work of their choice and sketched studies of the architecture and figurative sculpture in the Pillared Temple Hall in Caplan Gallery 324.

With many of the Teen Sketch students graduating from high school and looking forward to a future in the arts, their second semester focused on having them create a strong portfolio of diverse works, and also developing their own understanding and discourse in the arts. As the year closed, students exhibited their cumulative work and presented analysis of artworks in the gallery to their families, friends, and museum staff; showing not only their dedication to making, but a true love and appreciation for art.



Top: Instructor Andrew Christman instructing students on observation-based learning and teaching techniques

Above: Teen Sketch students learning printmaking basics from instructor Aki Tori

Left: Student sketching in a gallery

VISITING ARTIST PROGRAM

This program pairs professional artists with classroom art teachers. Students experiment with a variety of artistic media and create work inspired by the museum's collection. The program is supplemented with customized museum visits.

Franklin Learning Center (FLC)

From December 2024 through the beginning of February 2025, teaching artist Marian Bailey worked with FLC AP art students to apply the techniques and perspectives they saw in *The Time Is Always Now* into their own work. Visiting the exhibition allowed students to make complex historical, sociopolitical, and emotional connections. Inspired by what they saw in the galleries, students painted portraits of themselves and loved ones brimming with life and vibrant expression.



Program coordinator Ari Gutierrez-Sanchez leading a gallery tour



Student painting a portrait of their pets inspired by *The Time Is Always Now*

VISITING ARTIST PROGRAM

Esperanza Academy Charter High School



In a departure from more standardized, single discipline residencies, the program at Esperanza Academy Charter High School encouraged students to explore multiple disciplines. Teaching artist Cindy Lozito guided students in creating digital work, collage, and cyanotype prints inspired by personal experiences and connections. Drawing inspiration

from *The Time Is Always Now*—especially works by Nathaniel Mary Quinn and Lorna Simpson—students learned how to express large thematic ideas and complex emotional motifs. After first creating collage, students were shown how to use Photoshop to make composite images, which they then used to create cyanotypes.

Right: Cyanotype portrait of a person covered in flowers and superimposed over a garden

Top: Collage self portrait made with photographs and markers



Henry A. Brown Middle School

From November to December 2024, students took part in a residency that highlighted individuality through traditional techniques in ceramics. With their instructor Adam Ledford, middle school students looked at the Chinese tomb figures, early American earthenware, and portraiture in *The Time Is Always Now*. They created two finished works—a functional cup and a portrait bust.

Clockwise, from top left: Portrait bust of figure with mustache; Portrait bust of a smiling green figure; Students creating ceramic works in the classroom



VISITING ARTIST PROGRAM

AMY Northwest

For the months of January and February 2025, students had the opportunity to collaborate with multidisciplinary artist Stephane Rowley. They were particularly taken by *The Time Is Always Now* and the show's ability to speak to identity through symbolism. Inspired by history and pop culture, students collaborated on murals that were installed in their school.

Students in *The Time Is Always Now* exhibition, with Thomas J Price's bronze sculpture *As Sounds Turns to Noise* (2023)



Kensington Creating & Performing Arts High School

In collaboration with ceramicist Adam Ledford, this residency encouraged students to find inspiration from the works on view in *Firing the Imagination: Japanese Influence on French Ceramics* and *The Time Is Always Now*. Ledford encouraged students to create resonant works of pottery and portraiture through both hand-building and wheel-throwing methods. This residency created a particularly robust catalogue of work, and at its conclusion, a sampling of the student artwork was exhibited at the Reliance Matrix home office.

Top: Students learning wheel-throwing techniques from teaching artist Adam Ledford
Bottom: Wheel-thrown pots created by students



MIDDLE SCHOOL ART CLUB

This initiative is geared toward middle schoolers and pairs a classroom art teacher with a working artist to lead a year-long after school arts program, where students develop their technical skills as artists and work collaboratively to create large-scale projects inspired by the museum's collection.

This year, the program was directed by teaching artist Stephane Rowley and hosted at AMY Northwest Middle School with art teacher Veronica Kerwin.

Art Club strives to create a direct channel of communication and inspiration from the museum to a school community. Students were able to visit the museum four times during the program, first to analyze works from the intensely personal *A Dialog or A Dance: Portraits in Collaboration* photography exhibition, and then to dissect the complex themes explored in *Begin Again: Repetition in Contemporary Art*. After these visits, students were given specially-designed tours by museum educators exploring the stories behind the portraits in *The Time Is Always Now*.

Once the residency was in full swing, students focused their time on creating portraits. Emulating the bright colors and stark contrasts present in much of the work in *The Time Is Always Now*, students collaboratively painted vibrant backdrops and took photo portraits in front of the works, capturing



their youthful exuberance and showcasing their personalities. After this project, students began creating identity masks based on *The Time Is Always Now's* theme of Double Consciousness, exploring the intersections between their inner worlds and how they are perceived. After completing these masks, their finished work was exhibited at the Reliance Matrix home office. The year concluded with a final project

creating mixed-media portraits on wood panels that brought together the material skills and profound self-reflection the students had developed throughout their year.



Left: Art Club student collaborating on her photograph backdrop

Far left: Student painting self-portrait mask

Above: Three art club students wearing their completed masks

SPECIAL EVENTS

Halloween Screening

As a part of the museum's Halloween family festival in October 2024, Big Picture Alliance helped program staff assemble a collection of student films from the Summer Teen Media program themed around the frightful and macabre. Philly teens were invited to visit the Learning and Engagement Center to screen the films, meet new friends, and make crafts inspired by the season.

Hispanic & Latinx Heritage Month Screening

In celebration of Hispanic & Latinx Heritage Month (Sept 15–Oct 15, 2024), student Nayo Cebollero curated and MC'd a screening of films from the Summer Teen Media program highlighting Latinx

filmmakers and their stories about their cultural identities. Our partners at Big Picture Alliance edited the films together into a continuous run of show, and Cebollero accompanied Summer Teen Media alumni (Lola Perez, Saoni Lorenzo, Zahory Panneflekk Castillo, Deion Moya Almendarez, Emani Vega, and Lynn Peralta) in a panel discussing the intricacies of filmmaking and how their Latinx identity helps them develop a unique perspective.

Youth Health and Wellness Summit

In April 2025, program coordinator Ari Gutierrez-Sanchez and Associate Director of Teen Programs Adrienne Justice presented a curated selection of films about queer identities at the Philadelphia School Districts Youth Health and Wellness Summit. After each screening of films by LGBTQIA+ students from our Summer Teen Media Program, they had the opportunity to connect with students in the school community and recruit for applicants for summer programming.

Student panel discussion at the museum for the Hispanic & Latinx Heritage Month Screening



SUMMER TEEN SKETCH

This biweekly, all-day workshop series where high schoolers learn art-making skills over the period of eight sessions, culminates in a showcase of their work for their communities and museum professionals.

During July 2025, students visited *Brand X Editions: Innovation in Screenprinting*. Inspired by the thoughtful imagery and precision techniques seen in the exhibition, they responded by designing their own two-layer screenprints, beginning with hand-drawing their transparencies in the museum's studios.

This year provided students with excellent opportunities for hands-on learning with museum professionals. Christina Taylor from the conservation department talked to students in the *Brand X* galleries about the screenprinting process and paper conservation in a museum setting. Students went on two field trips to Second State Press, a nonprofit community printmaking studio whose mission is to foster the development of ideas and innovation in printmaking by providing a professional, affordable, and supportive workspace. Here, students exposed their drawings onto screens and printed their designs on paper with guidance from professional screenprinters on staff at Second State Press. Back at the museum, students experimented with printing their design onto other materials such as t-shirts, scarves, and custom collages especially made to receive their designs. Students also explored more experimental forms of DIY printmaking such as bleach on fabric with stenciling, and cyanotypes.

This program concluded with a showcase of work hosted by the museum, with artist talks led by the student makers. Students were presented with certificates of completion for their hard work.

Top to bottom: Students showing off their work at Second State Press; Student prints created during the Summer Teen Sketch semester; Students at the Summer Teen Sketch showcase with their friends and family



SUMMER TEEN MEDIA & FILM SCREENING



Students and staff at Ground Floor Studios on their Big Pitch day

This year, the Philadelphia Art Museum collaborated with Big Picture Alliance and Esperanza Academy Charter School to offer the Summer Teen Media Program—where teens learn about and practice each phase of the filmmaking process, from script-to-screen.

Throughout this intensive six-week program, eighteen students create a personal film inspired by their life and individual experiences. The program provides the opportunity for each student to oversee the production of an entire short film, including script writing, acting,

directing, cinematography, and editing. Instructors Bettina Escauriza, Dwight Wikins, and Nikki Harmon returned to lead the students through an exploration of the theme of *Power*.

This year students spent the first three weeks of the program at the museum taking gallery tours with museum educators and creating their first two films inspired by and filmed within and around the museum. Their first project, known as the Art Film, challenged them to create silent films inspired by works in the collection and the architecture of the museum. For

their second project, students focused on crafting personal films that reflected their own stories and experiences. Created in groups of three, eighteen short films were written, shot, and edited over a two-week period. This time in the museum allowed Summer Teen Media students to immerse themselves in the collection, even on days the museum was not open to the public. It also gave them access to museum professionals through tours, with particular focus on *Staged: Studio Photographs from the Collection*, as well as a behind-the-scenes tour led by museum audiovisual

SUMMER TEEN MEDIA & FILM SCREENING

professional Jay Roselius of the multimedia dance installation, *Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz: Moving Backwards*. The films this year showcased motifs of grief, romance, trans identity, immigration, and self discovery.

The last three weeks of the program were spent at Esperanza Academy Charter School, where students were placed in three groups of six to create narrative shorts. The students divided into three production teams, and each student took on a professional role—such as writer, director, cinematographer, lighting or sound technician, actor, or editor—mirroring a real-world film crew. Focusing on the theme of *Power*, Summer Teen Media students developed three original films: the coming-of-age thriller *Bittersweet*, the horror comedy *Choose One*, and the sci-fi drama *2153*. Students developed their scripts and pitched their films to industry professionals at Ground Floor Studios and incorporated their feedback into the scripts and pre-production. The event provided students with valuable experience in selling their creative vision.

The program concluded with the annual film screening with family and friends at the Esperanza Arts Center. The entire group was presented with certificates of completion, with a select few receiving awards for excellence. This latter group included:

- Visionary Award for Artistic Achievement to Jedediah
- Visionary Award for Storytelling to Shyann
- Hype Award for Outstanding Enthusiasm to Ibrahim
- Teamwork Award for Collaboration to Savannah
- Thespian Award for Acting to Khailah
- Philadelphia Art Museum Artistic Achievement Award for Creative Excellence to Ailani

[View the behind the scenes video of the Summer Teen Media program here.](#)



Top to bottom: Summer Teen Media students filming at the museum