

Local students thrive in Phoenix art scene

Sarah Dettmer, sdettmer@greatfallsribune.com 8:48 p.m. MST December 8, 2016



(Photo: Photo Courtesy of Cortni King)

The background sound of David Bowie crooning the lyrics "ground control to Major Tom," is accented by the wet slaps of 17-year-old Emma Sizemore's hands on a mound of brown clay.

"I'm making mushrooms on a flat surface, and then they kind of rise up," Sizemore said. "Our trip inspired me to take my concentration toward nature."

On Dec. 1, the Great Falls High School Advanced Placement Studio Art students traveled to Phoenix with Cortni King, GFHS visual arts department head. The 11 students spent four days touring the art scene of Phoenix and participating in National Portfolio Day at Mesa Community College.

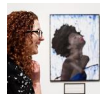
Representatives from several different art and design colleges across the country visited the college to look at students' portfolios and provide critiques, suggestions and determine whether they are at a college level yet.

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"I love to do ceramics - hand-building and throwing on the wheel," Sizemore said. "I got a lot of good feedback. One representative was so sweet and politely worded her critique. She said I need to focus on the process more than reaching a final product. She said a lot of my work is very figurative - it turns out looking exactly like what it's supposed to be. She wants me to get more abstract."



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(<http://www.greatfallsribune.com/story/news/local/2016/11/17/artwork-shows-discord-misplaced-self/94050728/>)

Sizemore intended to go to Montana State University for college, but her class trip to Phoenix has her considering Arizona State University. Sizemore said she would like to complete her core work at MSU and then move on to ASU to further her studies in art history and ceramics.

"This trip totally put it on my radar," Sizemore said.

As she continued to pound away on her mound of clay, fellow AP Studio Art student Jerry Schmit sat down at her work table.

"I like to do more architect-based work," Schmit said. "I've always wanted to be an architect, which is why I went to the Cornish Institute representatives on Portfolio Day. I thought I'd go to MSU, but now my thoughts are going more broad."



Jerry Schmit, a senior at Great Falls High, discusses his portfolio in Phoenix. (Photo: Photo courtesy of Cortni King)

The students also had the opportunity to visit the Phoenix Art Museum during their trip. The museum was hosting a special Kindhe Wiley exhibit, featuring the artist's massive portraits of women on floral backgrounds. The students viewed some of Wiley's works in class, but were surprised to get the opportunity to see them in person.

"For them to see an artwork in person has a totally different impact," King said. "It really inspires them to push their creativity and boundaries."

The Phoenix Art Museum is home to works ranging from traditional, old paintings from the Renaissance to contemporary, avant-garde installations, King continued.

"Globally, Los Angeles and New York are the major art hubs, but Phoenix has a very vibrant art scene," King said. "They experienced things they just wouldn't in Great Falls, Montana. It really expands their opportunities and world-view."

The students were greeted back home in Great Falls on Dec. 4 by a snowstorm and freezing temperatures. Though they couldn't take the warm Arizona weather with them, the students went back to the GFHS studio with the artistic influences from their trip in mind.

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