

Pour Your Art Out! T.C. Williams Students Explore Metalworking With a Hands-On Art Experience

NEWS PROVIDED BY

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Sep 07, 2016, 08:30 ET

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ALEXANDRIA, Va., Sept. 7, 2016 /PRNewswire/ --Art students at T.C. Williams High School will get their hands on the tools of the metalworking trades, thanks to a partnership with the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association and master metalworker Philip Harrison and his mobile foundry.

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Metal sculptor Phillip Harrison leads an ironworking lesson with students from T.C. Williams High School (Credit: Michael Ford, Yellow Cat Productions)



Phillip Harrison pours molten iron into molds carved by T.C. Williams High School arts students while his crew tend to the furnace (Credit: Michael Ford, Yellow Cat Productions)

The project, Pour Your Art Out!, is designed to give students a powerful and memorable hands-on art experience. Professional artists and members of the trades work with students to design, prepare, and cast components out of molten metal. Some of the resulting iron components will be used to construct a community-based public artwork.

During the successful pilot program held at T.C. Williams in May, students were introduced to the history of blacksmithing and metal casting, as well as the material science and fundamentals of design behind the medium, in classroom-based activities led by metal sculptor Philip Harrison and Alexandria artists affiliated with the Torpedo Factory Art Center and Art League School. Using tools to scratch into sand and resin-bonded molds, students composed and created designs for their individual iron components. On the final day of the program, Harrison fired up his traveling furnace to allow students to produce two poured iron tiles — one to keep and a second to contribute to a community-based collaborative arts installation.

Alison Sigethy, a Torpedo Factory Resident Artist facilitating the project on behalf of the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association Community Outreach Committee, first approached Harrison for a personal public arts project, but soon realized that his enthusiasm and expertise would be better suited to educating young artists. "Working with a seasoned pro like Phillip allowed us to expand the pilot beyond our expectations. We were able to involve far more participants, including

student artists, members of the school's technology department, and professionals representing wide-ranging roles in the metalworking field — from sculptors and jewelers to foundrymen and metallurgists. Students were engaged more deeply as they experienced firsthand the chemistry, engineering, and design aspects of the project from these experienced mentors."

Beth Coast, Visual Arts Department Chair at T.C. Williams, will host Harrison, Sigethy, and other visiting artists in her classroom annually as the iron pour project grows. "This collaboration with the Torpedo Factory artists is a wonderful opportunity for our students," Coast said, "and with the success of this first project, we look forward to expanding Pour Your Art Out! and to future partnerships with these talented artists."

Grace Breitenbeck, a student enrolled in Ms. Coast's Sculpture II course, was thrilled to take part in the pilot program. On site at the iron pour, she said, "This is the dirty side of art, which a lot of people don't see. I think it's important to do this because it exposes you to so many things that you wouldn't typically be able to do. We have the traditional art classes, but never anything that is this complex and this detailed. It's amazing to be able to work with the Torpedo Factory to do this."

The Torpedo Factory Artists' Association and T.C. Williams High School look forward to future collaborations through this engaging arts program. Sigethy is excited about the future of this project, "With the installation of this public art work, the components created by the student artists will be literally woven into the fabric of the Alexandria community," she said. "This public sculpture will be the first of many tangible contributions to the community landscape created through this program. Students can view and take pride in their work for generations to come." For more information about how to take part in the program through participation or funding, please contact the Torpedo Factory Artists' Association at tfaa@torpedofactoryartists.com.

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