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## Miramonte Art Center Enters New Era

Submitted by Catherine Soso



Art by Bridget Bitzer Photos provided

Deborah Hovey-LaCour has brought a new approach to teaching art at Miramonte High School. Her previous career as a graphic designer and art director in San Francisco brings an added benefit to her curriculum. She is a painter and a photographer who also loves drawing the guild models, and provides her honors and AP art students the chance to work with them as well.

"I hope the time spent in my classes is not only enlightening as to the importance and power of art in our lives, but is helpful for my teens to discover themselves and what is in their 'heart of hearts' - the place from which they must create," says Hovey-LaCour, who believes art can be cathartic for those who are stressed or distraught over things that occur in this most challenging period of their lives.

The art classes at Miramonte are very different from those in the middle schools. Students learn techniques and theory but also learn to weave meaning into their work. Students do critical analysis and learn about old masters as well as contemporary artists in all sorts of disciplines.

"My students are asked to work from a personal place. I have portfolios on everything from environmental activism to the suffering of kids with eating disorders, from the pain of losing one's mother to the physical workings of the human body in correlation with machines," she says.

Hovey-LaCour would like to see the Miramonte Art Center become the heart of the campus, where students can come through and enjoy the space while viewing artwork by their peers in the upstairs gallery. She has thought of showing art documentaries at lunch for her colleagues and any students interested in art. She takes her students to the deYoung Museum and SFMOMA each year and sometimes has Open Studio Saturday where they can draw, mat some work, eat pizza and photograph pieces for their AP portfolios.

Student art is exhibited in the community and they participate in local and national competitions. Hovey-LaCour brings in friends who work in the art world - illustrators, painters and designers. She always has four or five former students come in to talk with her advanced students about the art programs at their four-year and art colleges. Sometimes former students join them for critiques and encourage her current students to work hard.

She facilitates mock interviews, portfolio experience and resume building to aid students in choosing a career. "It's staggering how many jobs there are in fine art, design, museum work, film and architecture. They all begin with the fundamentals which are offered by high school art teachers," states Hovey-LaCour. "These fields are very competitive, so why not begin training in high school before the high tuition fees begin?"



Art by Julia Albo



Poster by Liana Shaw

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