



at young adults—like the yearly Scholastic Art Awards and the recently-launched Teen Open Studio, a five-month program that brings arts teachers to over 20 local high schools with the goal of helping students create original pieces to be shown at the NMA at end of the program.

“The two organizations are stronger when we work together,” Muñoz said. “We can produce bigger events here in our facility than they can do at Holland Project. It also helps the two organizations to reach different audiences.”

Watching young artists grow in the museum setting, Muñoz said, is both personally rewarding and important to the NMA’s long-term investment in the local arts community. The growth in popularity of Teen Art Night specifically, she said, is proof of the concept.

“When we first launched the program back in 2008 or 2009, we had about 200 participants,” Muñoz said. “In recent years, we’ve had about 700 ... so, it’s just this really exciting energetic night and now we’re seeing these kids kind of grow up through the museum and ... hopefully that’s part of their life-long engagement with the museum. You know, they have these really important anchored memories here that will last them as they age through the different programs that we offer.”

## START 'EM YOUNG

One of those young people is Alberto Garcia, a longtime Holland Project member and volunteer who currently works as a freelance art curator and researcher for the NMA. Now 23, Garcia was introduced to the Holland Project through an event called Stranger Show at the NMA when he was a sophomore in high school.

As both an attendee and an organizer of Teen Art Night in years past, he said the event played an important role in introducing him to the building and profession in which he now works, and changing his perception about enjoying art in a classical setting.

“[Teen Art Night] is just a space where you’re allowed to be pretty much anything,” Garcia said. “I know that sounds very broad, but it’s a space where you don’t feel intimidated by such a, like, ivory tower institution, which cultural spaces can be.”

While no longer a teen himself, Garcia is volunteering as staff at this year’s event and is happy to contribute to what he feels is an important event. While the aim of the night is to have fun, Garcia also said events like this get young people thinking about the culture they exist in, and the reciprocal nature of

society—higher concepts, he believes, that are best explored through the arts.

“Ultimately I think what we’re doing is just fostering a relationship and introduction to culture,” Garcia said. “They contribute so much to it and they don’t even think about it sometimes. They’re consuming so much through online platforms and social media. These are things that are being fed to them, but they contribute to also. And a museum is also a place of culture, a place that holds ideas, theories and concepts that they’re very much part of.”

Zoe Mansfield is a junior at Hug High School who identifies with the nongendered pronoun “they” and was recently hired as part of the Visitors Services staff at the NMA. To Mansfield, Teen Art Night, like many of the Holland Project events they have attended over the past three years, is ultimately a way to engage in one of their passions with likeminded friends.

“I think that for the most part, at least for me, because it’s something that I enjoy so much, like having other people to talk to about art, and to discuss what we think it means and why we enjoy it, instead of just kind of sitting there alone without really any context—it feels out of place when your just alone without anybody that you can discuss art with,” Mansfield said.

Mansfield said the crafts aspect of Teen Art Night, which in years past has included staples like wood burning and leather working among others, makes the galleries more appealing than the usual purely visual experience. The unifying theme also brings the Holland Project’s sense of community into the museum space, which they said is important for young artists and not always easy to find.

Connections between young artists and formal employment opportunities offered by the museum are also invaluable to people like Mansfield, who considers their involvement with the Holland Project and recent hiring at the NMA the building blocks to a future in the world of art.

“In the future, I hope to go to school to learn about art and art history specifically,” Mansfield said. “Part of the reason that I chose the job at the museum is because I think that it’s a good space to, kind of, exist in if I want to become an artist or art historian. Being around art all day was a really big pull for me, because it’s one of the places in Reno that I love.” □

Teen Art Night will take place April 26 from 7 to 10 p.m. at the Nevada Museum of Art. The entrance fee will be \$10.

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