

Fitchburg Elementary School students visit Fitchburg Art Museum

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Theopoula Awad, a grade 4 student at Fitchburg's McKay Arts Academy, took part in a recent classroom visit to the Fitchburg Art Museum. SUBMITTED PHOTO

FITCHBURG – Theopoula Awad, a grade 4 student at Fitchburg's McKay Arts Academy, was drawn to the Indigo Project House exhibit on a recent classroom visit to the Fitchburg Art Museum. The artist, Ifé Franklin, constructed a replica of a slave cabin from drawings and plans found in an 1839 book about slavery in the American South. She asked women around the world to contribute dyed swatches of indigo fabric and constructed the small 8 foot structure using the cloth on the wooden frame.

"I was amazed by it," stated Theopoula. "It's impressive because of how they dyed the fabric. I think the artist was trying to say we all should work together because she got women from all over the world to make it."

All grade 4 students from the Fitchburg Public Schools will be able to visit the museum this year, thanks to a grant awarded to the Fitchburg Art Museum. Ann Descoteaux, Director of Docents at the museum, has designed the program and arranged for the visits. Students viewed the Plastic Imagination exhibit, the Neal Rantoul Monsters exhibit and the Global Africa exhibit.

Grade 4 Teacher, Trisha Caulfield, was glad her students received this opportunity. She and fellow teachers, Riitta

Cote and Marci Cheries-Roy accompanied their students throughout the morning and required students to complete an assignment during their visit. Students were asked to describe their favorite work and contemplate what the artist was attempting to convey through the artwork.

“The students got a chance to experience a museum visit,” explained Caulfield. “The African exhibit gave them a great cultural experience. When they viewed the plastics exhibit they were able to see how everyday items can be recycled into works of art.”

Volunteer docent, Maurice Toolin, gave a presentation to students on the Plastic Imagination exhibit including a short history of plastics and information on how plastic is made. Throughout the gallery he explained how the artists used plastic materials to develop their works of art.

Many students were drawn to the work of artist Lisa Barthelson, who created a mandala wheel using plastic items she found in her home. The circular work of art includes many beads, toothbrushes, plastic jar covers and plastic buttons, all arranged in perfect symmetry.

Sumi Yang, another grade 4 student from Fitchburg, liked Barthelson’s works. “She is using her creativity to make art,” observed Yang. “She thinks of her family when she does her art and makes art from the plastic things they use.”

The Plastic Imagination exhibit is on display until mid-January and is made possible through sponsorship from many plastic companies in the region.