

Meet the Artists

Leon Carswell (“Breakdance!”)

Leon has been dancing since he was 6 years old. The hip-hop culture enriches the lives of children and helps them engage with their community. Leon became a professional dancer at the age of 18, and has traveled and competed extensively throughout his dance career. Leon has danced and choreographed for well-known artists and has performed in popular films. He has received official recognition for his excellent community work through hip-hop.

Chavella Dobbins (“WOW! Watercolor” and “Wonderful World of Clay”)

Chavella has an A.A. in Visual Arts from Merced College and a B.A. in Art from CSU Fresno. She enjoys drawing, painting, clay, sculpture and mixed media. In addition, Chavella has graphic design experience with Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. Her work has been shown in the African American Historical and Cultural Museum of the San Joaquin Valley. Working with children from 4-16 years old, Chavella has taught art classes in local schools, at the Merced Boys and Girls Club, and at the Merced Multicultural Arts Center.

Eulalia Gamez (“Painting with Acrylics” and “Paper Mache Sculpture”)

Eulalia (Lulu) Gamez is a local artist who works in multiple mediums. She graduated from University of California, Merced in 2013 with a degree in Psychology. Lulu works as the Director of the Enrichment Center at the MAC, an arts program for adults with developmental disabilities. She has exhibited her work through out Merced and created the costumes for the larger-than-life Catrina during the Day of the Dead celebrations at the MAC and Arte Americas center in Fresno.

Lisa Gilliland-Viney (“Portraits”, “Abstract Art” and “Japanese-Inspired Art”)

Lisa Gilliland-Viney is a versatile artist who taught herself how to paint after moving to the Merced area 15 years ago. She trained and worked as a research scientist prior to the move. Her mediums include acrylic and watercolor paints, oil and soft pastels and most anything that can be used for drawing. Acrylic paints and mediums have become a favorite means of self-expression due to her love of experimentation, and the wide variety of approaches they offer her in making art. Lisa has over 16 years of experience teaching painting and drawing to children through the ARTREE program. Lisa is a

member of the Arbor Gallery and the Contemporary Humanitarian Artists Association. She works as the Education Director at the MAC.

Sofia Prado ("Clay & Collage Animals")

Sofia was born and raised in Mexico City and lived there for most of her young life. She graduated from Evergreen State College with a BS degree in Biology. Sofia is particularly interested in the crossover between science and art, having enjoyed her botanical illustration class and a geology/art class in which she painted with natural pigments found in soils. Sofia is a self-taught artist who loves to learn by experimenting with mediums and ideas. She is very fluid in thought and creatively flexible. Sofia is on the board of the Applegate Park Zoo and is a member of the Arbor Gallery.

Ruben Sanchez ("Drawing from the Heart")

Ruben Sanchez was born in Fresno to parents who were migrant workers. Ruben's father did seasonal work such as pruning peach trees in the winter. Both parents worked in the summer to plant tomatoes, hoe cotton and sugar beet crops, harvest green tomatoes, pick peaches, and then harvest the cannery tomatoes and pick grapes for raisins. Ruben helped in the fields and orchards during weekends and in the summer vacation. Working with his hands harvesting fruits and vegetables naturally developed into a career as a produce vendor. Ruben took art classes throughout his schooling, honing his skills in figure drawing classes at Merced College, where he earned an AA degree in business. He worked locally for many years as a freelance commercial artist and has painted murals with youth at local schools. In 1985 he co-founded the Contemporary Humanitarian Artists Association (CHAA) with local artists Frank Ayala and Abel Corchado.

Ruben's artwork is found in private collections throughout California, in San Antonio, Texas, and in Puerto Vallarta, Tiaquepaque, Guadalajara, Mexico City, and Jalisco Mexico; and in London, England and Australia.

Lora Wheeler ("Graffiti Journals")

Lora has extensive experience in fiber arts, working primarily with quilting. She is also an experienced educator, having taught third through sixth grade students in the Merced County schools for the past 30 years. Lora has conducted after school art classes in bookmaking and printmaking, and she has run an afterschool art club for primary grade level students. She has worked as a quilting instructor for Merced College, and holds leadership positions in both the Fresno Arts Guild and the Merced Gateway Quilters Guild.