



Dartmouth Week

Dartmouth High AP art students hold first in-person show since 2019

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Senior Mia Carter stands with her untraditional portraits of her family. Photos by: Morgan Beard.



The small room at the old Russells Mills Schoolhouse was filled with art students and visitors.

Arianna Stevens' works focused on her relationship with her cultural heritage.

The old Russells Mills Schoolhouse at 1205 Russells Mills Road.

Ella Mercer's collage work examined waste and sustainability.

Kat Charrier's work used textiles and patterns to stretch the boundaries of 2D art.





Dartmouth High's AP art students returned to the Old Russells Mills Schoolhouse for their first public show since 2019 on Tuesday, April, 12, hosted by the Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society.

The show was titled "Studio 555" and featured portfolios from 18 students across two different advanced placement, or AP, art classes at the high school.

The young artists presented a diverse field of works ranging from digital drawing and photography, to fashion and collage that will soon be submitted to the AP Board for review.

AP art teachers Morgan Bozarth — whose class focuses mostly on photography — and Christine McFee said the classes would usually hold separate shows, but were merged this year because it was a smaller group than usual.

"This is like a recovery year," Bozarth said. "Hopefully next year will look more normal."

Still, McFee praised this year's students for their mutual collaboration and support.

"It's a great group of kids," she said. "They work well together — They want to see each other succeed."

The two said that Dartmouth High makes a conscious effort to encourage AP participation, which can earn students college credit.

"It's a great learning experience and good prep for college," McFee said.

The art teachers explained that each student had to choose a "sustained investigation" which would act as the thematic link between all their portfolio pieces.

For senior Arianna Stevens that theme was her emotional experience with her cultural heritage which includes both Filipino and Cape Verdean roots.

In one of her pieces, a mosaic of shattered ceramic forms a bowl filled with traditional Filipino ingredients, which is superimposed onto a painted background.

"The bowl is me feeling broken in my culture," said Stevens, explaining that while she identifies with her Filipino heritage, she cannot speak the language, leaving her somewhat isolated from the culture.

In another piece, Stevens created a caricaturistic sculpture of a dark-skinned woman with exaggerated features like long braided hair and wide hips. She said the piece is supposed to reflect the way natural features of women of color are often co-opted by white women for fashion, having their cultural significance stripped away in the process.

"It's not just hair; it's more than that," she said. "This is who we are. We can't take it off."

Senior Mia Carter also chose to focus on her family, producing a series of paintings and digital drawings she said aimed to represent her family members in portraiture "while kind of breaking the rules."

"They capture the feelings I get when I'm with them," she said. "I just wanted to honor them in that way."

While some of the pieces depicted the family members themselves, others were represented by landscapes that "toe the line between real and fantastical," she said.

Other topics were less personal but no less meaningful.

Ella Mercer's works, for example, were united around sustainability and waste, using collage to underscore the point.

In one piece, she pasted bits of plastic and trash around magazine images of fruits and vegetables, creating a grotesque feeling of waste.

In another, she layered plastic bags — stamped "Thank You" with a homemade stamp — over an oil pastel image of the earth to create the illusion of the whole world being dropped in a cheap supermarket bag.

"I wanted to shed light on the problem, because there is a lot [of waste]," she said.

Some students even pushed the boundaries of their assignment, like senior Kat Charrier who produced a variety of textiles and patterns, such as a from-scratch dress and a hand-dyed and bead-embroidered handkerchief.

"I'm supposed to be in 2D art, but I love sewing," she said. "So I decided to mix the two and this is what came out."

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