

Summer Arts Camps allow kids to show off their talents to community



Arts and crafts have been a cornerstone of summer camps for generations, but dedicated arts camps offered by the Aurora Cultural Centre take things to the next level.

The Aurora Cultural Centre's Summer Arts Camps are now underway at the Aurora Public Library, offering half-day and full-day sessions for youngsters between the ages of four and 12, covering everything from 'Art Through the Ages' to the 'Colour Around Us.'

'Not all of this is sketching and painting; we do art through many forms and we try to take art from as many different places and have the background to teach them, especially for our Art Around the World or Art Through the Ages weeks, we have staff educated in the art we're teaching them,' says Camp Supervisor Joey Shapiro. 'If we're doing Chinese Dragon paintings, for example, we have a little lesson on the cultural significance of the dragon in China and the techniques that would be used there. It's about taking art from different media forms and different skills, and also from different cultures so they broaden their artistic horizons.'

Adds Aitak Sorahitalab, the Aurora Cultural Centre's new Education and Outreach Coordinator: 'It is very important for us to have the voice of different cultures within the community. For example, we don't teach Indigenous art without them - we bring an artist from that community to our camp to teach that practice.'

Sorahitalab, a resident of East Gwillimbury, recently joined the Centre in May, describing her new role as a dream job.

'Art is my life,' says the sculptor of what drives her from a programming perspective in what is, for many, a post-COVID world. 'We wanted to bring people in the community together again, so we started all our classes in person, including summer camps. We have nine weeks of programming and each week has its own theme. We are planning to have four guest artists to work with children in a half-day so these artists who have either worked with us before or have had an exhibition with us in the past, or later in the future, so we're able to tie our programming together - the education programming, galleries, everything.'

'Art, I believe, is very appreciated in this community. We have families not only from Aurora, but Markham, Richmond Hill, and other communities in York Region. It's very popular. We even have a few children who have participated in our programs before and are coming back.'

In addition to exposing kids to a wide array of artistic styles and media, another important aspect of the camp for Sorahitalab is to build on social skills coming out of the pandemic.

There were children who come with low soft skills because of COVID, who are maybe four-years-old, have never been out of the home before, but now they come together in this camp and socialize, she says.

This week's camp, which runs July 10 - 14, is focused on Artistic Imaginations, which highlights fantasy, myths and legends and how to create cool art pieces based on unicorns, dragons, mermaids, monsters, and so much more.

Colour Around Us runs July 17 - 21, with campers advised to dress for mess.

This week is all about using big and bold splashes and pops of colour to create bright and imaginative pieces, say organizers. Campers will learn how to mix colours, create light and dark hues, and discover which colours help others pop out and step back.

July 24 - 28 is Sculpt It! week, where campers will be able to create 3D pieces using clay, model magic and found objects. They will work with a variety of tools to discover unique properties of these unconventional mediums.

Art Around the Globe takes place July 31 - August 4, with hands-on lessons on how different artforms have been curated around the world.

A short week follows August 8 - 11 when Faces and Places is the theme. Using a variety of materials, drawing styles, and artistic expressions, students will look at famous portraits and landscapes done by artists from around the world. Campers will discover how they can relate to art through their own unique lens and learn how to express their personalities through line, shape and colour.

Art Through the Ages is the next theme from August 14 - 18, which will let campers travel to the past to see how art evolved over the centuries and be inspired to create pieces based on key art movements, from Renaissance to Realism and everything in between and beyond.

The penultimate week of the camp, Famous Artists & Their Styles runs August 21 - 25 with an outline of the styles and techniques of some of the most famous artist in history. From da Vinci to Dali, campers will learn about various mediums and experiment with recreating iconic artworks, each with their own unique flair.

The camp wraps up August 28 - September 1 with character development. Learn how to tell your character's story through visual art. Campers will take inspiration from their favourite movie characters, and create their own, using various art materials and techniques.

Registration is required for each of the weeks and may be done so through auroraculturalcentre.ca.

Following the camps, participants will have the opportunity to showcase their work in a unique way during Culture Days near the end of September, the details for which will be announced in due course.

In addition to broadening the artistic horizons for kids four to 12, the camps also provide a great opportunity for art-minded high school students to earn their community service hours.

If anyone is looking to volunteer with us for their community service hours or just like working with kids, we're always happy to have an extra set of hands, says Shapiro. They would be asked to assist the kids with making their art, helping us set up the room, play games and activities with the kids - just like being a camp counsellor. I think this is a unique opportunity to work at a camp specifically for art.

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