

Anastasia Teper

Arts Programming Overview + Teaching Artist(s) Bio

The Menninger Clinic, Pathfinder Unit, Houston, TX 2019-2022

I wrote and conducted weekly art workshops with young adults with severe mental health illnesses and substance abuse issues. Topics were varied but most were on building confidence and/or exploring personal ideas/thoughts and feelings. The group was 60 minutes long and we would have anywhere from 1-7 participants at a time.

Project Art: www.projectartonline.org, June-August 2013, Teaching art to youth, Harlem, NYC. Ages 10-17 years old

Project Art was about providing free, fun and engaging art lessons to low-income inner-city children, the classes were usually held in the libraries all over the city, my age group was from 5-13 years old, and some groups could have 7 people other groups ten at a time, the classes were usually 45 minutes long.

Chelsea Foyer, 202 west 24th street, NY, NY, 2009-2012

I designed and conducted weekly art workshops with a group of young adults, ages 18-25 who were foster care youth and/or out of foster care and have been living in a transitional residential facility. Our work medium included collage, mixed-media and acrylic as well as oil abstract/acrylic action painting.

AHRC, 80 Maiden Lane, NY, NY, 2006-2008

I provided individual art classes as well as use art therapy to engage autistic children, helping them develop their sense of self as well as the world around them. Classes were 30-45 minutes and were usually 1-1.

Artist Bio

Mrs. Teper is a mixed-media artist. Mrs. Teper was raised in Brooklyn, NY and grew up in a Russian-Jewish immigrant family. Mrs. Teper is a visual artist and she also has 17 years of direct social service experience working with high-risk populations. Mrs. Teper's first-hand experience with mental health struggles, addiction and social and racial inequalities ignited a passion for using art as a catalyst for individual and societal change. Visual storytelling is a very powerful tool, art has a unique ability to change people's world views and personal perspectives, it has power to change, move and transform, it is also a language that everyone speaks. Art is a tool that anyone can use and Mrs. Teper takes great pride in using this tool in ways that can amplify voices of people forgotten, thrown to the curb by our society, of those in need and of those suffering. Art brings to light those left in the dark. Mrs. Teper has a BA in Psychology (Brooklyn College, NY 2007) and an MA in Criminal Justice (John Jay College, NY 2011) as well as an MEd in Art Education (University of Houston, Houston, TX 2020). Mrs. Teper has been an

exhibiting artist since 2010 in NYC and has worked with youth at risk extensively, as well as the homeless, HIV/HCV + individuals and youth with autism-providing art workshops and art classes to age groups ranging from 4 years of age to 75.

Artistic Content of Programming

The artistic content of my programming is when individuals are able to learn and uncover more about themselves while creating an artwork, as we work, I do talk about color schemes, compositional strategies, subject matter and really empower folks and children to just go for it and experiment. Working with children can be different than when I am working with adults. I think that at this point of my life and career, I am being very intentional about our topics with adults and we would choose a theme to address and then collect information and images and write ideas down before starting on a particular piece. When it comes to children, we also come up with a topic and I give them specific instructions in terms of how they are going to compose it on the page as well as help them with certain things if they are not able to do so themselves, children also tend to work quicker. The artistic content is self-expression and risk taking but the topics are usually focused on social justice issues, personal stories, their daily experience in their roles now or they chose a poem they would like to illustrate, and we do an artwork on that.

My most common interests and passions revolve around on the ground community work. I am currently employed with the Metro Department of Health in a Behavioral Equity Team, my work revolves around community members who use drugs, I see families daily and I see how they struggle. I also do weekly jail visits to speak to those incarcerated about their experiences and how we are able to help. Racial, economic and educational disparities are very visible here in Louisville. In January of next year, I will be working at the department of health part-time because I would like to focus on community art making and healing more. I just recently came back from "Creating Healthy Communities convening" that took place last month in Florida, the intersections of art and public health is huge and real and there already has been much research done about how the arts can heal and mend communities torn by racism, war, drug addiction and so much more. We all share the same language and that is the language of love and healing and all of us are artistic even if we never picked up a paint brush or pencil.

Educational Content of Programming

The educational content is usually learning how to be able not to be scared and open up through creating art with others, how to be able to visually tell your story and through that educate others who might not be familiar with that individual's race, ethnicity, their background, their dreams and fears and to educate others about their own experiences and towards the end to have a respectful, warm and welcoming circle of creative individuals who feel confident and respected for who they are and their personal stories. Learning through making art and working as a community is "learning" and it is

educational. I focus now on visual ethnographies as a way to educate, I usually work on those myself after speaking extensively to participants. Now within the context of a community setting, I will have the participants themselves create their own portraits and then I can see if they will need assistance in making them "their own " and telling their stories. I will certainly be adding my own touch as a complimentary addition to their own portraits, but I probably would want them to work on themselves and not to be afraid to make mistakes, explore, take risks and maybe create not one but several ones as all will represent that individual differently. The visual ethnographies are cool because any age range can make them, children, youth, adults and seniors.

Process for hiring, training, and evaluating my performance/effectiveness.

I ask people around me to give me advice and or share their thoughts. I am also a current member of NAEA- and so I make sure that I stay up to date with current literature and what other artists and educators are doing and how it's working for them. I am also very retrospective and when I work, especially with community members, I ask for their advice and opinion, then try to improve on things that might have been highlighted. For me personally the people I work with mean a lot and I do talk to them before making any new pieces of art that are reflective of their experience. I also when financially able go to art conferences and other conferences like the one I had just mentioned in Florida if I find that to be beneficial for my work.

How are participants of all backgrounds and abilities included in programming?

I make sure that these art projects are not created in isolation, for me the populations I chose to work with and the populations I have grown up in have mostly been of all backgrounds and abilities. I currently have two children, one 8-year-old boy has dyslexia, and my 6-year-old daughter has autism. I am very excited to do more work that could be representative of these groups as well as I believe that even in art education, we do not include these groups at all. In my work in the community first as a direct social service provider then as a researcher and as a community member myself, issues of racial and ethnic injustices, economic struggles, violence and many other issues have always unfortunately been present so I am very well versed in these issues and now just want to find a way to elevate the people and give them hope through art making, be it individual and or community. I will also add and say that surveying and talking to the participants themselves about how to improve and what to do better is also very beneficial, it is critical to be transparent!

How do I engage teachers and community center staff before, during, and after programming?

I will definitely talk to all of the community staff and teachers who might be helping me out about what we are doing and why and that usually helps break the stigma or diffuse some misconceptions about why people might be gathered in a particular place/space. I also would have flyers about our work and will give them out to staff as well as try to engage them to come and do art with us-if they feel connected to any of the issues discussed and/or addressed. After programming, we make sure that myself and others clean up really well and see if any of the non-participants have any questions for us but usually, we leave the space clean and behave there respectfully.

How do I engage participants in the creative and learning process?

Everyone is different, forcing someone into the creative process will never prove successful. I try to be vibrant and focused on the work at hand, folks seem to engage themselves as they are working and then it just flows naturally; for others it might be difficult for one reason or another and with them we might shift gears and maybe decide to work on something that they might want to personally or something they might feel at ease with. The learning happens as we create either individually or together, learning takes time and people have proven to be super receptive to being creative and sometimes even taking risks because they might have never painted before or drawn. I always want to be respectful of everyone's process of working and learning so there is not a one way that one should do something because each individual is unique and therefore has their own unique way of learning and expressing themselves creatively. I believe that engagement and learning happens through action so I usually work together with the participants. I also will add that time, patience and trust is very important and once folks will see that you genuinely care about them and what they have to say, they become engaged.