

Mixing It Up: Students Benefit from Teacher's Unconventional Extra-Curricular Activities

DECATUR, Ga., April 16, 2012 // Most students at Academe of the Oaks, an independent high school grounded in Rudolf Steiner's Waldorf curriculum and philosophy, know that their English teacher, Ben Roosevelt, leads a double-life. They know that, outside the classroom, he's a successful artist.

What they might not know is how Mr. Roosevelt's artistic endeavors affect them.

Roosevelt's solo exhibition "The Blue Flame" opened on March 17 at Atlanta's Get This Gallery, where it runs through April 28 (free admission). The moody installation piece is set in a mythical watering hole where, as Atlanta pop-culture web-site Luxecrush notes, "Roosevelt welcomes us into an immersive, archetypal seedy roadside bar that channels Iggy Pop, Dante's The Divine Comedy, and the Romantics and charts the birth pangs of artistic creation and human life in general via text, drawing, sculpture."

"The Blue Flame" is just the latest of the multidisciplinary artist's many projects, which highlight the juxtaposition of everyday life with its not-so-ordinary aspects. Roosevelt's work has been featured in U.S. and international exhibits, including Talent Show: the 2007 Atlanta Biennial; Legion at the Ard Bia Gallery in Galway, Ireland; and House Projects, a series of group exhibitions and residencies across London, Ireland, and New York City. He won the Atlanta-based Forward Arts Foundation Emerging Artist Award for 2007-2008, and his work has been featured in publications such as the Village Voice, Circa, the Atlantan, the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Atlanta Homes & Lifestyles, and the Irish Times.

Roosevelt sees his roles of teacher and artist as complementary, especially in terms of enhanced divergent thinking. As a working artist, he explains, he is used to working under conditions where new ideas and connections can be freely made and expressed. That means that, as a teacher, the ideas and associations that pop up during class often add fuel to the creative fire, so to speak.

"Teaching is a perfect counterbalance to the solitary existence of art," Roosevelt explains. "Interaction with my students is always engaging--their level of energy and excitement about things is an inspiration. It carries over creatively and, in that way, it helps me feel like making art is worthwhile!"

Roosevelt also acknowledges the similarities of creating art and teaching: During class he regularly guides students through collaborative discovery processes, allowing for plenty of improvisation as ideas are exchanged in real time. And Roosevelt will no doubt feel at home in front of a room full of engaged, curious attendees during his "artist's talk," scheduled for April 21 at Get This (noon to 1pm, free)!

For more information, visit: http://getthisgallery.com/index.php/artists/info/ben_roosevelt/

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See also...

[Get This Gallery](#)

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[A preview of Mr. Roosevelt's "Blue Flame" in Creative Loafing](#)

[Photos from the opening of the Blue Flame exhibit](#)

[Mr. Roosevelt's profile at <academeatlanta.org>](#)