

Invisibility

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Seniors from High Tech High Media Arts brought the invisible to light during a multimedia exhibition exposing hidden paradigms, underground cultures and unresolved issues. Through documentaries, photo/sound essays, and video installations, students critically explored topics such as graffiti, rave culture, youth activism, self-mutilation, and the media. Students developed their projects in HTHMA's sound lab, using technology to showcase information they gathered from expert interviews and in-depth investigations of local professional, cultural, and institutional communities. The exhibition took place at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in downtown San Diego.

Teacher Reflection

Playfulness, curiosity, adventure, fun—must a vast abyss always divide these vital states of mind from academic achievement? Hopefully not! I re-learned a precious lesson from my students this year. Exploring intrinsic passion inspires success and cultivates joy! It is the art of effortless effort, a state of steady flow.

Behind every piece in this exhibition was a story of a student who undertook a personal, artistic, and intellectual exploration, and in doing faced many challenges. For John, a struggling student whose graduation hung in the balance, completing a successful project was of paramount importance. And yet, he could not find a topic to research. My colleague knew John well enough to tap into one of his passions with this question: Is graffiti art or vandalism? Thus, a successful documentary project was born, one that included interviews with police officers, tours of legal graffiti venues, and the creation of several art pieces.

An important element of any project is that student work be displayed for an authentic audience. To that end, my teaching partner and I wrote a proposal “pitching” our project to the MCA's Educational Curator. The result was one night and ample space to exhibit our students' work. After the magical exhibition evening, the museum staff were so impressed with the professionalism of the work, they invited our students back. Three months later, the MCA hosted our “Freedom” exhibition, extending its hours to display its permanent collection alongside our students' work.

—Lacey Segal

For more on this project and others visit

<http://www.hightechhigh.org/schools/HTHMA> and <http://www.hightechhigh.org/pbl>

