



Kids Paint Their Own Future at ARTHOUSE BY LINDSAY K. SAUNDERS

A unique art studio for children has arrived in downtown Raleigh. ARTHOUSE, located in a newly renovated historical building on E. Hargett Street, allows children of all abilities to create their own masterpieces.

Seasonal sessions are offered in the fall, winter, spring, and summer for children over the age of three; each session is composed of ten, hour-long classes. Children are able to complete one project in two classes and all work is meant to be frameable. "They're learning the techniques of the masters while developing their own technique," says director Kalesia Kuenzel.

"I love that Campbell is learning about Warhol, Pollock, Cezanne, Van Gogh, and lots of others," says Donna Davis of her four-year-old daughter who has been attending ARTHOUSE for a year-and-half. "Recently, we were at an art museum and Campbell saw a painting and



recognized a brush stroke and told me, 'It's called impasto, like Vincent Van Gogh used to do.'"

Kalesia is proud of the fact that children learn about great artists and then pass that knowledge on to their parents, "These three-year-olds are teaching their own parents. Because they're so young, they're able to process art and they learn quicker than those who start at a later age."

Kalesia always knew one day she'd be doing something like this. She studied Graphic Design at NC State before obtaining a Master's Degree in Global Innovation Management. She knew she wanted to start her own business that combined her love of art and children. "I knew I wanted to teach kids," she says. "Everything about my educational experience brought me here."

At ARTHOUSE, she teaches them to learn with their senses. She keeps fresh flowers and plants and always keeps candles burning in the studio. Christmas lights

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are strung across the room, The lighting above makes it “feel like they’re in a fantasy,” she says.

Kalesia believes a quote by Pablo Picasso truly represents ARTHOUSE: It took me four years to paint like Raphael, but a lifetime to paint like a child. “When children are little they’re not afraid of white space,” explains Kalesia. “They can make their own decorations and just be creative with no pressure or restrictions.” One of the projects on display in the studio that stands out is an American flag made of handprints. She tells us that one of her students had made it as a Christmas gift for his grandfather who was born on the Fourth of July.



Kalesia wants the kids to own their work so once they finish a project they proudly call it “my masterpiece.” They sign the bottom right hand corner just as professional artists do. For the youngest ones who aren’t able to write their name yet, they write the first letter of their name instead.

Kalesia explains she came from an artistic family, which was her inspiration in founding ARTHOUSE. She’d like young children to have the opportunity to feel the same magic she did with art. Eight-year-old Katie Felah’s Mom Sarah agrees, “When I was Katie’s age, I didn’t have anything like ARTHOUSE to take part in. I really wish I had though.” With that in mind, Kalesia insists on having small intimate classes grouped by age, with a maximum of four students per class. Each class is taught on their skill level and according to their interests. “We help them transfer their ideas onto canvas,” says Kalesia. “They feel really accomplished because this is a place of expression.”

Eventually she’d like to grow the programs at ARTHOUSE and make more classes available to more students. Even if she adds more staff to help, she always wants to teach. “I would love to expand and watch even more kids learn, grow and blossom. It’s going so well and becoming a place where students can create the kind of art they want.”

ARTHOUSE is located at 716 W. Hargett St., Raleigh, NC 919.821.2212 www.arthouse4kids.com

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