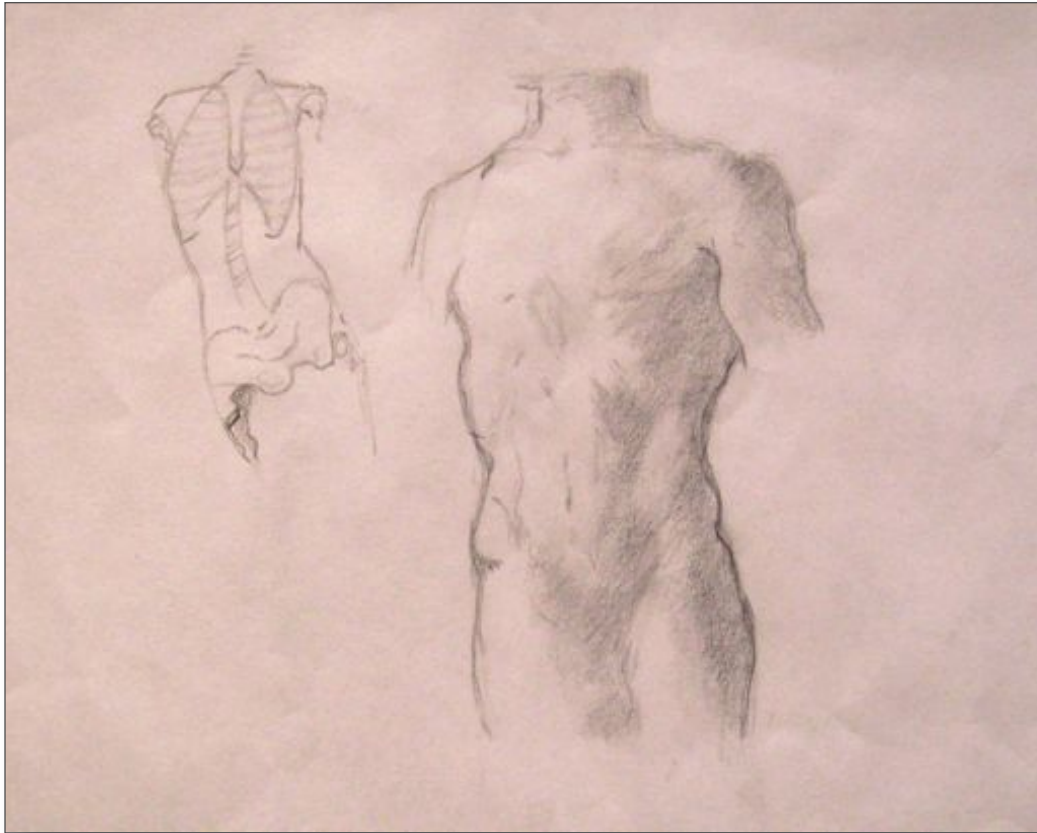


Art of the human form

High school artists display their work at Millicent Rogers Museum

By Dory Hulburt



Drawing by Mikayla Hernandez-Boyd

The human figure is an endless source of inspiration for local artist Michael Hensley and he is infusing a new generation of teenagers with his enthusiasm.

Anatomical drawings by his students from the Taos Arts Club/Teen Art Studio will be the focus of “Artistic Anatomy: The Art of Drawing the Human Form,” an exhibition that opens with a reception Monday (April 11), from 5-6 p.m. at the Millicent Rogers Museum, 1504 Millicent Rogers Road. Admission to the reception is free of charge.

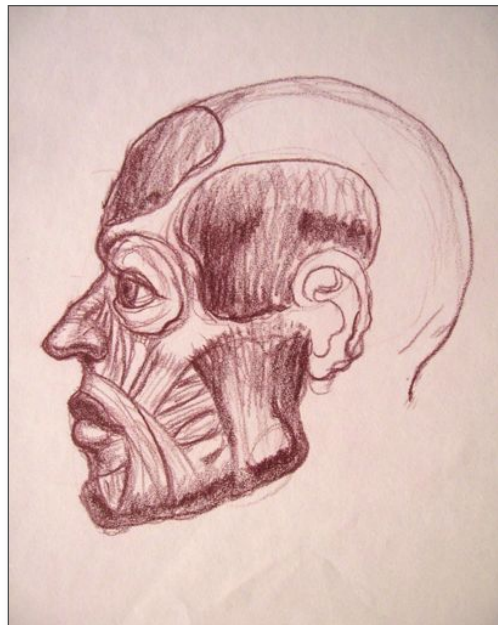
According to Faith Hensley, public relations manager for the Millicent Rogers Museum, and who is married to Michael Hensley, the museum’s staff wanted to address the lack of affordable summertime art opportunities for teenagers in the 12-18 age group.

Michael, a figurative artist who has been studying anatomy for more than 30 years, volunteered to do eight sessions on anatomical drawing for teenagers. Attendance was great, Faith said, “and the work they were doing was so fantastic that they wanted to continue it.”

Taos High School culinary arts teacher Mary Spears volunteered her classroom on Mondays from 3-4:30 p.m. for what became the Taos Arts Club/Teen Art Studio. Anywhere from 28 to 40 students have been showing up, with an average of 30.

“This is almost classical training, blending of the math, science and artistic parts,” Faith said.

“They’re learning the names of the muscles and how they work. They’re also focusing on mathematical proportion. Just seeing the work from the kids, I’m amazed at what talented kids we have.”



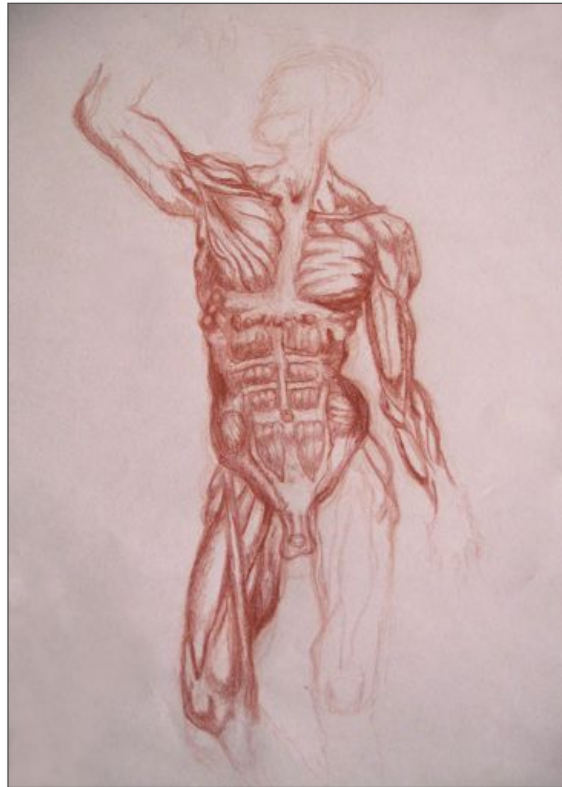
Drawing by Josh Parken

“I thought the content would be a little advanced but they actually seem to be thriving in it,” Michael said.

He based the curriculum on how he was taught at the National Academy of Art and Design in New York City. He began with gesture drawings to develop the students’ confidence in line and to expose them to the idea that they did not have to erase their mistakes — mistakes can be blessings in disguise leading to discoveries and individual styles.

He built up to planes and geometric shapes to simplify the approach to various body regions, in particular the ribcage and pelvis. After the students started understanding line and shape, Michael

Hensley broke down body parts into anatomical structure, emphasizing the skeleton to impart an understanding of bony landmarks in terms of proportion.



Drawing by Anna Donaldson

Currently, he is introducing his students to muscle groups.

“In the beginning we gave them enough time and kept it relatively simple and they’ve been building on it. I’m surprised at how good they’ve been doing for their age, especially having no experience with it at all,” Hensley said.

He feels that high school students are particularly neglected in terms of school programs.

“They love intellectual stimulation but there are not a lot of opportunities for them, especially in the arts,” he said.

Professional workshops often start at \$800 and teenagers don’t have the funds or feel comfortable alongside the adult artists, according to Hensley. The Taos Arts Club/Teen Art Studio fills a niche, he said.

Hensley grew up in Taos and had the opportunity to learn from community members who were giving back to the community. “I feel like it’s a nice thing to do that in return,” he said.

His own anatomical explorations are on display at his website, www.artistanatomy.com, featuring figure drawings, art studies and anatomical plates that can be used for study guides. “It’s there for the taking for anyone who wants to use it,” said Hensley.

Unexpectedly, he has had as many medical students as artists using the site, for help in anatomy and physiology classes. They get access to good information, but poor drawings, and they find Hensley’s studies more accurate with respect to live structures, he said. When he established the website, he was inspired by his own efforts as an art student to find encouragement and instruction.

“It makes me feel good that it helps somebody,” said Hensley.

Meanwhile, the Hensley’s hope to keep the Taos Arts Club/Teen Art Studio going, for “an age group that’s been under-served in the community,” according to Faith. They plan to do another free, eight-session workshop at the Millicent Rogers Museum in June and July.

The show will be on view from Saturday (April 9) through May 15.

For more information, contact the Millicent Rogers Museum at (575) 758-2462 or visit their website at www.millicentrogers.org.