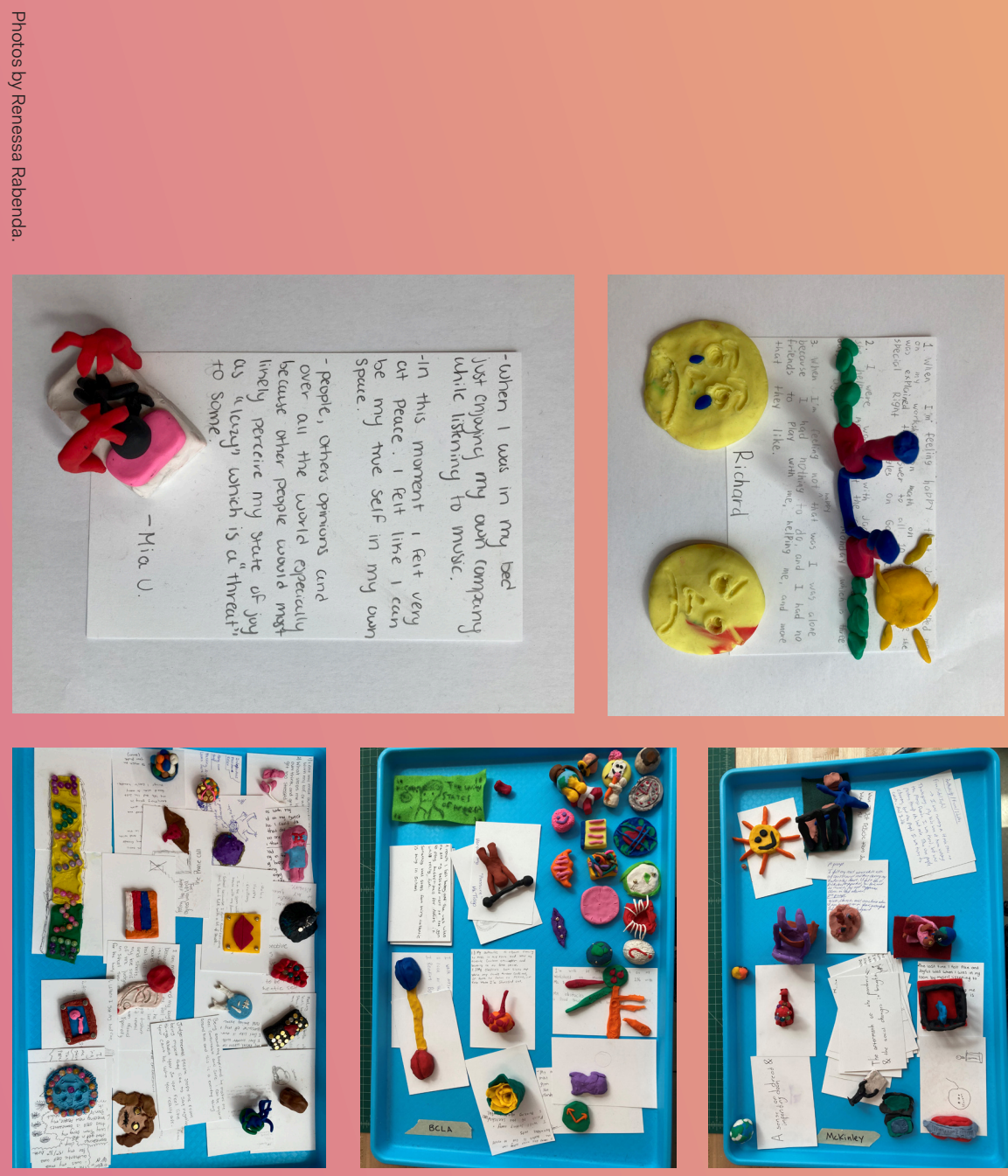


WallTalk 2022-23



Photos by Roseanna Belandieri

WallTalk 2022-2023

Authenticity

What needs to happen in order for people to feel like they can be authentic? How do we present ourselves in different spaces? How do we authentically take up space?

This year, WallTalk students explored the theme of authenticity and engaged in open discussions to question and challenge what it means to be authentic.

Focusing on three key exhibitions, *Rose B. Simpson: Legacies: To Begin Again: Artists and Childhood*; and *Simone Leigh, WallTalk Teaching Artists explored authenticity in contemporary works of art through the lens of form, identity, and power.* With questions like: What is form? How does an artist's identity inform their work? And how are power and authenticity related? Students reflected on how their personal experiences and identities connect to contemporary art while informing their own creative experimentation in visual art, writing, and performance.

Focus Exhibition 1: Rose B. Simpson: Legacies

WallTalk Fall 2022 ICA Visit Breaking Through...

After working in the galleries, students headed to the ICA's Bank of America Art Lab to create clay sculptures that represent something that stops them from being their authentic self. Once created, students left their sculptures behind!



Rose B. Simpson, Goddess Squared, 2019. Ceramic, steel, and wood. Collection: William A. Miller, Boston, MA. Courtesy: Contemporary Art, Santa Fe, NM. © Rose B. Simpson

IDENTITY

During fall 2022, students explored identity in contemporary work by mixed-media artist Rose B. Simpson to ask how identity informs an artist's work, where we find our own identities reflected in art, and how we can authentically represent our identities in our own art-making.

- Discussion Prompts
1. What is powerful about this piece?
 2. How does Goddess Squared represent authenticity to you?
 3. How would you choose to represent your identity through art?

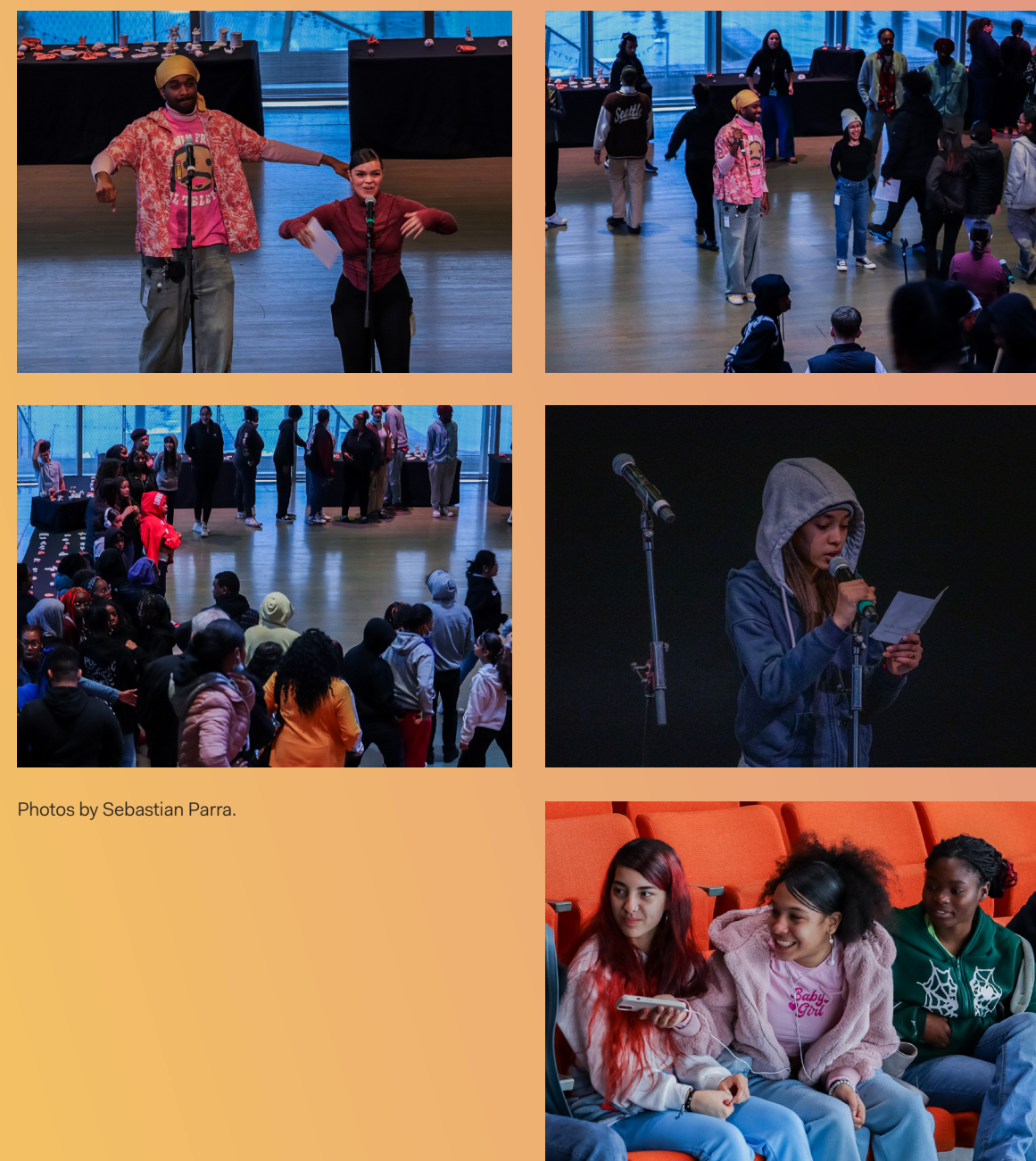


Photos by Sebastian Piara



Reading Jam

At the end of WallTalk, students expressed their authentic selves during the 2023 Reading Jam in the ICA's Barbara Lee Family Foundation Theater. Students and teachers from various schools came together to celebrate the year. After viewing an exhibition of their clay vessels, many of the young people chose to bravely perform their written work live on the stage or recorded on video.



Photos by Sebastian Piara

Tori DelValle is a Puerto Rican designer and visual artist based in Boston, MA. She grew up and still resides in the South End's Villa Victoria. She is an alumna of Boston Latin School & New York University Tisch School of the Arts.

Dubem Okafor is a Nigerian-American Multimedia artist based in Boston, MA who creates spaces for both himself and others. Whether he does this through visual works, paintings and graphic design, or in the music he makes through the alias of 'calvinkeincaterpillar' – Okafor aims to connect to others, translating his own creative Language.

Durane West is a Boston born, spoken word artist with a love for coloring based in Brighton, MA. In eighth grade, he stumbled upon poetry to express his feelings for a crush. Winner of the 2021 Poem for Roxbury contest, his favorite forms of poetry are haikus. West was published four times in 2021 from 826 Boston. Write on the Dot, Mother Mercy, and Boston Hassle.

Coco (Corine) Rosenberg (they/ themme) is an artist, educator, community organizer, and care worker-rooted in the power of the arts in social justice movements, the radical imagination of youth, and pulling from ancestral lineages and spiritual technologies as a queer, trans, Jewish, and disabled person. Coco is a mixed-media artist, working in printmaking, film photography, poetry, textile art, and collage.

Fatima Seck is a writer, artist, land steward and birthing worker. She works through a community-based storytelling practice to explore birth, play, neighborhoods, public space and Black diasporic cultures.

Taina Vargas is a mother, artist, educator, and small business owner with roots in the Dominican Republic. She has nearly two decades of experience providing quality art education to diverse learners through a studio practice centered around themes of gender, culture, and identity. She primarily works with photography, printmaking, ceramics, and mixed media. Taina splits her time between Boston and Western Mass.

In-Class Visual Art Workshop

Body as a Vessel

As the 2023 Reading Jam approached, teaching artists visited students in the classroom to create clay vessels inspired by the work of contemporary sculptor and artist, Simone Leigh. Students were asked: how can we use clay to create vessels that represent vulnerable/important parts of our individual identities and communicate parts of our collective stories?

The vessels created by students were later displayed at the Reading Jam for everyone to view!

Introduction

WallTalk is a multidisciplinary arts engagement program for Boston middle and high school students that encourages creative thinking, open discussion, and individual connections to contemporary art through visual art, writing, and performance. Centering on ICA exhibitions, the program consists of multiple museum and classroom visits over a school year in which students observe, question, interpret, and respond creatively to the art and issues of our time. Students work closely with teaching visual artists and writers to guide their critical analysis. The experience culminates in a Reading Jam in which the ICA Barbara Lee Family Foundation Theater becomes a brave space for WallTalk students to come together and showcase their creativity in an exhibition of their visual art and performances of their writing.

Through this program, the ICA aims to provide an engaging and supportive environment for student expression and to make contemporary art an integral part of the development of young people. This publication is a record of our year together to share both our process and a selection of the work created.

During the 2022-2023 school year, the ICA collaborated with more than 350 students from eight partner schools: Boston Community Leadership Academy, Charlestown High School, Dearborn STEM Academy, Donald McKay School, Excel High School, McKinley/Melvin H. King South End Academy, Rafael Hernández School, and Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School. Using a wide range of exhibitions, students explored the theme Authenticity and produced a variety of writing and visual artwork.

The ICA/Boston is fierce in its commitment to teens. We believe that robust arts education is critical to building future artists, audiences, thinkers, and leaders and to creating more equitable education for young people. We offer a wide range of opportunities for teens to connect with art, artists, and one another through their schools or on their own. We know that museums have a unique role to play in the landscape of arts education, giving people direct experiences with art, convening people to discuss ideas, and acting as centers of community-based learning and social change.

This year's program would not have been possible without the generosity and dedication of many individuals and organizations. The ICA extends our most sincere thanks to the Wagner Foundation, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and many other foundation, government, corporate, and individual partners who allow us to do the work we do.

I am grateful for the many teachers and administrators at our partner schools who contribute time, energy, and enthusiasm to the program. I also extend my deepest appreciation to the ICA Education staff, Education Department Coordinator Lindsay Darnell, Education Fellow Renessa Rabenda, Teaching Artists Tori DelValle, Dubem Okafor, Coco Rosenberg, Fatima Seck, Taina Vargas, and Durane West, and most especially Jessie Miyu Magyar, School and Family Programs Manager. A final, heartfelt thank you to all of the young people who opened themselves up to art, to ideas, and to us. Thank you for authentically sharing stories, perspectives, and questions and for engaging with ours and one another's.

Betsy Gibbons
Director of Teen Programs
Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston

Lead support for Teen Programs provided by Wagner Foundation.



Teen Programs are made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Award Number MA-252104-OMS-22.



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Converse is committed to supporting movements for positive social change and amplifying youth voices as they build the future they believe in.



POWER

Discussion Prompts

1. What would you ask this piece of art to get to know it better?
2. What do you want to know more about?
3. What type of answers would it give you?
4. What would it ask about you?



Simone Leigh, Goddess, 2019. Stoneware, wood, steel, and copper. Collection: William A. Miller, Boston, MA. Courtesy: Contemporary Art, Santa Fe, NM. © Simone Leigh

In the spring, students explored the concept of power through the monumental work of Simone Leigh. Students had conversations with selected works during an in-gallery activity called, "If Art Could Talk." Try this activity with Cupboard!

Focus Exhibition 3

Light Simone Leigh

Focus Exhibition 3 Activity: If Art Could Talk

Students returned in the spring, this time having a conversation with a work of art from the Simone Leigh exhibit.

From student, BMO

Questions created

You: Can I call you mama effia?
Art: Yes, my child. Why do you pry?
You: Life is hard, mama effia. Do you struggle as well?
Art: We all have struggles in life my child.
You: So, what do, mama effia? How can I fix them?
Art: How you work through these struggles is up to you.

From student, Elias V.

Questions created

You: Are you embracing something or calling someone over?
You: I am embracing those that wish to share their authentic selves with me.
Art: I am embracing those that wish to share their authentic selves with me.
You: Why is your head like a pot or vessel?
Art: I am looking to be filled with the experiences of others.
You: Why are you so tall?
Art: I am this tall to catch the eyes of others.

From student, Yovany R.

Questions created

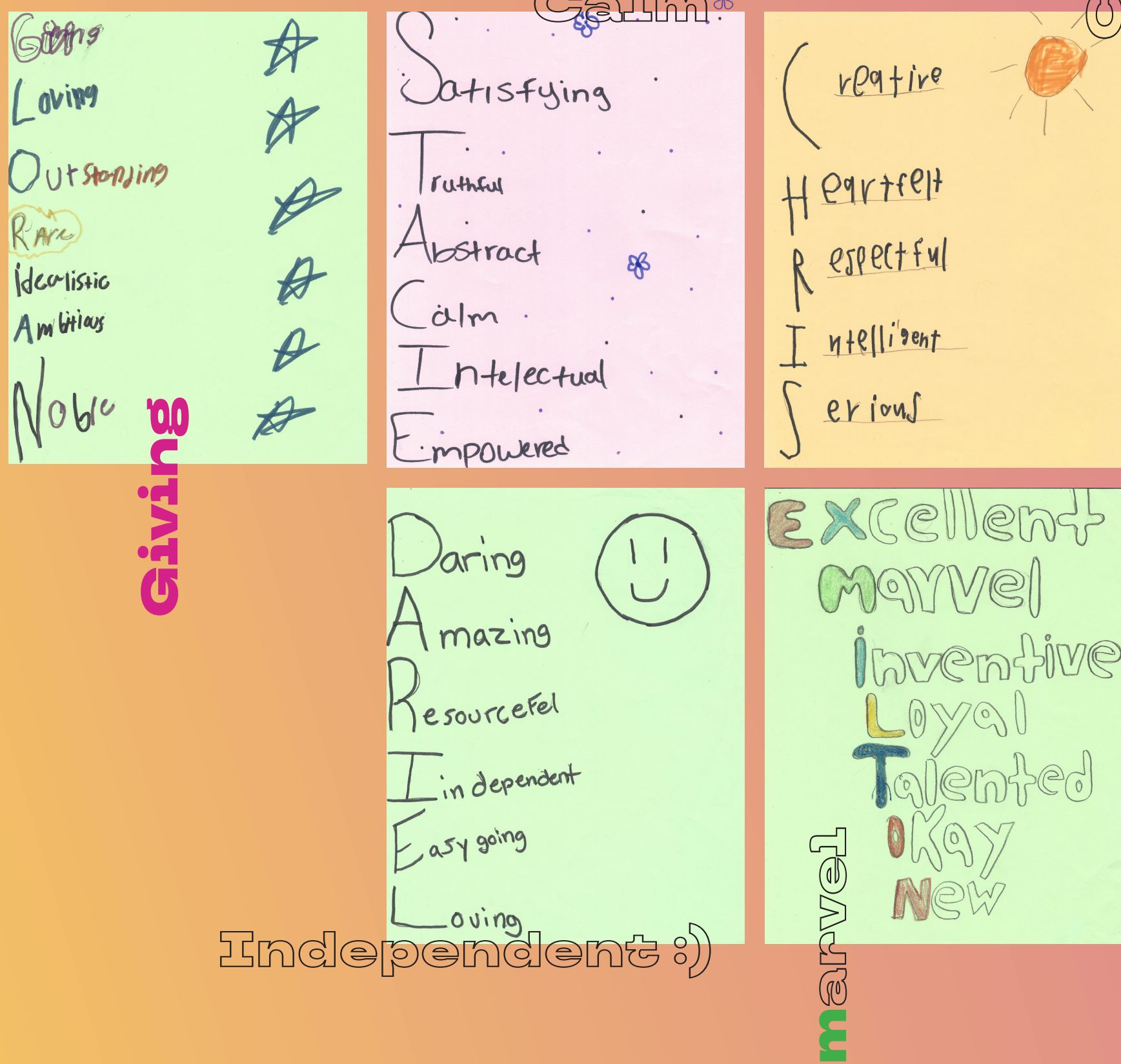
You: "Nothing"
Art: Hello my child, what's your name?
What's your tribe my love? Are you lost? Do you remember?
You: Oh, hi, my name is Yovany, I don't know what's my tribe but I wish I did, I'm lost! Well, in some places maybe and if I remember what?...
You: What you help me, mama effia?
Art: Of course, my child. Work with me.

In-Class Writing Workshop / Acrostic Poems Role Call

What is in a name? Teaching artists asked students this question when they visited their classrooms and invited them to write acrostic poems using their names. The artists wanted these young people to see that words have power and that power comes in many forms.

Discussion Prompts

1. Who gave you your name?
2. What sorts of meanings does your name have to you, to the people who gave you your name, or to others?
3. If you could make up what your name means, what 3 words would your name mean?



Authentically Me



Photos by Sebastian Parra.



Boston Community Leadership Academy
Charlestown High School
Dearborn STEM Academy
Donald McKay School
Excel High School
McKinley/Melvin H. King South End Academy
Rafael Hernandez School
Young Achievers Science and Math Pilot School

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