

# Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend

## WITH THE KIDS



## Imagine that, then draw it

High art has its place, but these workshops focus on getting kids to think creatively — to "go crazy."

By Brenda Rees  
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On a recent Saturday afternoon at the Bowers Kidseum, a group of kids were given a creative task: Invent a character, design where he/she/it lives and give that character a pet.

After a brief moment of silent introspection around the big table, artistic juices gushed out of these pint-sized Rembrandts, who quickly picked up charcoal sticks to begin their latest masterpieces.

"Mine's going to have a monkey," said one youngster.

"My guy is going to live in an ice cube," piped up another.

"I'm drawing a virus that lives in a computer," said a third.

With wacky, wondrous ideas and kid sensibilities, these budding artists were participating in a recent drawing and character development workshop with Sergio C. Muñoz, a.k.a. Chief Ten Dogs, a 31-year-old banker-artist from Newport Beach.

These workshops are not designed for kids with aspirations toward high art — instead the sessions are geared for those who wish to explore, expand and stretch their imaginations. Call it creative aerobics for the masses.

Sitting elbow-to-elbow with the kids — and getting just as much charcoal dust on his fingers, elbows and cheeks — Muñoz patiently leads the drawing workshop with an easy, laid-back attitude full of encouragement and observations.

When one kid wanted to draw SpongeBob SquarePants, Muñoz suggested, "Why don't you draw his brother or cousin? Do your own thing, man. See what you can think up."

Getting kids to think on their own is precisely the goal of these workshops, sponsored in part by the consulate general of Mexico, Art Center College of Design and the Chuck Jones Center for Creativity. Workshops are scheduled for Saturday and Sept. 17 at Art Center's South Campus in Pasadena.

Marian Jones — the widow of animation pioneer Chuck Jones, who died in 2002 at age 89 — was on hand at the workshop to watch the magic unfold. "It's extraordinary," she said as she surveyed some of the finished sketches taped to the wall.

"Kids are learning about creating character — how to infuse a sense of character from just a few lines," Jones said. "And it's interesting to watch how embarrassed the kids were at the beginning of the workshop, how quiet they were. Now look at them. They are full-steam ahead."

Indeed, inhibitions were conveniently tossed on the floor once the kids realized that all ideas and thoughts were welcomed at the table.

"My two grandchildren love to draw, and this [workshop] is just wonderful," said Jean Wilcox, a retired teacher from Tustin. "There is no pressure here, and the children can express themselves and have a good time."

Making art a part of a kid's life needs to come first from parents, said Mike Brennan of San Clemente, who watched his daughters — 8-year-old Madison and 5-year-old Mackenzie — doodle and create.

"We have an art table at home and even set aside time for art," Brennan said. "We turn the TV off and give the girls choices. Usually they pick drawing."

There is a push to invite kids from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds to come and discover their talents at these workshops, which are free and open to the public.

"We're targeting kids in certain after-school programs, through nonprofit organizations and foundations in the Pasadena and L.A. areas," said Cecilia Ybarra, outreach project manager at Art Center.

"These are students who might not be normally exposed to an arts program," she said, adding that the "workshops are perfect for kids who are interested in arts, storytelling and creativity, but who might not have an outlet."

For Muñoz, the workshops represent a "support system" for kids who are interested in art. "I would love to see a kid in the fourth or fifth grade eventually get into Art Center," he said. "I would love to be able to ultimately mentor them through the process."

(Muñoz, the son of Los Angeles Times editorial writer Sergio Muñoz, is the artist in residence at the Mexican Consulate and the author of an illustrated book for young adults, "Churchill: Alive!")

Though a creative career in the arts may be down the path for some of the kids at Saturday's workshop, the reality of the moment was focused on the playful exchange of ideas on paper that resulted in giggles and laughter.

By the end of the class, sketches, characters and crazy combinations were the room's wallpaper. One character lived in a rocket ship, another in a pencil case. Splashing dolphins, big-haired gals, piranhas and even Osama bin Laden hiding in a cave were represented.

"Will you just look at all this?" Brennan, said contemplating the finished products. "It's amazing what happens when you let kids go crazy."

## **Workshops**

**What:** Creativity and Character Development Workshops

**Where:** Art Center College of Design, South Campus, 950 S. Raymond Ave., Pasadena

**When:** 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday for 10- to 13-year-olds; Sept. 17 for 14- to 18-year-olds

**Price:** Free

**Info:** (626) 396-4235