

Los Angeles Times CALENDAR weekend

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WITH THE KIDS

Youthful global village

Exhibit of art by kids from around the world reveals a bigger picture.

By Brenda Rees
Special to The Times

Mister Rogers was right. We do have lots of neighbors.

A new exhibition at the Junior Arts Center Gallery in Barnsdall Park showcases how children around the world interpret their neighborhoods — whether it's their backyards, cities, countries or even the world.

Featuring youth artwork from Mexico, India, Indonesia, Colombia, Brazil and the United States, "My Neighborhood International" has been a labor of love for volunteers and artists who for three years have been collecting — and who continue to gather — artwork from these worldwide workshops.

A workshop for Los Angeles children is scheduled from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday at the Junior Arts Gallery. Artwork created there will also become part of the traveling "My Neighborhood International" exhibition.

The idea for the exhibition started with a local mural project in 2001. Then, says project president Hamidah Glasgow, it became "a grass-roots project that took on a life of its own. We expanded the concept of neighborhoods to mean the global village; we went to find out what children around the world had to say to each other about where they live."

Teaming up with resident artists in various countries, Glasgow and other volunteer coordinators visited rural and urban schools. After the kids warmed up with theater games, they settled down to the task at hand: What do you want the world to know about you and your neighborhood?

Many of the images on display have distinct environmental themes — bucolic scenes of grass, trees and flowing water. "Even in such savage, desolate environments in South America where people actually live in and around dumps, there was this plea for nature," Glasgow says.

Elsewhere, the children in Ladakh in northern India created images of peace and religious freedom. "Many of these children left Tibet and their families to come to a place where they could be free," Glasgow explains. "They dream of having that freedom back in their homeland."

Perhaps some of the more striking images for Glasgow are paintings from an orphanage in Mexico. Creations from young Ricardo, a boy with cerebral palsy who is confined to a wheelchair, and Ignacio, a blind student, show "such enthusiasm for life, a fearlessness mixed with a strong hope for the future," she says.

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'My Neighborhood International'

What: Workshop for the "My Neighborhood International" exhibition

Where: Junior Arts Center Gallery, Barnsdall Park, 4814 Hollywood Blvd., L.A.

When: 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday

Gallery hours: Noon to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays and during special events. Exhibition ends Jan. 3

Price: Free

Info: (323) 644-6275; workshop reservations recommended