

Freeing our creative side: Pick up an art class at the Nassau Museum!

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As visitors took their first tentative steps to return to the Nassau Museum back in July, I noticed a fascinating trend in their responses to “real paintings” by contrast with the online simulacra they had been stuck looking at all spring.

Many were eager to express their feelings through their own art. Released from lockdown, turned on by the joy of Matisse’s radiant blue cutouts or the big swathes of color in Helen Frankenthaler’s poured painting that are the highlights of our blue-themed show, they wanted to give it a try themselves. Who could blame them?

Art is a marvelous outlet, a colorful way to make sense not only of the world but our deeper natures.

So we decided to step up our already robust program of art classes. We moved our renowned Art Compass programs for people on the autism spectrum online as well. While many comparable institutions were laying off teachers and shrinking their educational programs, we doubled down on new offerings taught by hiring master teachers from across the region whose reputations attract their own followings.

It is especially gratifying to see lifelong learners sign up for something new and challenging. One of our star students is Paul Vegoda, whose watercolor techniques are improving by leaps and bounds under the tutelage of Pam Koehler.

Paul is an art lover who knows how to make the most of a Museum. He and I have pondered the meaning of works in the exhibitions in my director’s seminars, and he spends a day at our front desk as a volunteer. We share the belief that making a painting in response to a work we are studying is a valuable way to learn its meaning as well as the deeper secrets of how it was made. I notice he never misses a session of classes or a seminar.

Designed for adults and teens, these virtual studio art programs are led by teaching artists with years of experience with students on all levels of art-making backgrounds and interests.

Projects provide opportunities for personal expression in a variety of studio art classes, using both group and individual projects to help artists discover, learn, and practice art skills and processes.

Among the featured offerings that you can sign up for online, allow me to recommend Still Life Drawing with Pam Koehler. Draw from a live arrangement during this Zoom class, and learn to arrange your own still lifes in your home studio while applying the concepts of composition, value, perspective and contour line.

Another marvelous class is Botanical Watercolor with Oksana Danziger. Practice mindfulness and creativity in a relaxing and meditative watercolor class. Begin with light stretching and visual meditation, followed by watercolor painting while observing live florals and images, learn various painting, color mixing, and application techniques to create original floral-inspired works of art.

For all the information you need to register online for these classes (before they sell out), just go to <https://nassaumuseum.org/education/#art-classes>.

By Charles A. Riley II, PhD

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