

Parkside Students Benefit from Community Based Learning project and visiting artist Carlo Giardina.

By Lauren Landry, Janet Jurado

Brought to our community by Professor Carey Watters for the creation of a mural in Kenosha, I had the privilege of interviewing visiting artist Carlo Giardina. The questions in the interview ranged from personal questions to questions about how the mural will impact the community. The first question I asked was how Carlo got started as an artist and he told me that there were two pivotal moments in his career as an artist. Carlo defines these crucial moments as “One is how I professionally became an artist and the other is when I understood I could interact with reality in a different way.” To him, being an artist means trying to interact with reality with the most pure heart and soul. Though he started doing art as a child, he really started to feel the weight-lifting effects of art when he understood this concept. During his answer, he also answered my second question about what motivates him to do art. Carlo says, “It’s kindness.” Kindness is the biggest motivating factor for his art creation. He mentions that everyone is born kind and as we grow, we understand that there are “different shades and shapes of kindness.” Carlo’s form of kindness is through art.

I noticed that Carlo’s art style is heavily influenced by biology and life forms. When I asked about this, he answered “They are really beautiful and I was always mesmerized by the shapes of nature.” His passion for nature has been there since he was a child as he wanted to work in earth sciences when he was younger. Later in his response, he discusses energy and how he channels the energy of nature through his artwork. Carlo expands on the topic, “It’s [energy] totally practical and it helps biologically and physically to release and reach energy from anything.” His artwork is a direct response to the pure beauty within nature.” Though he said it is impossible to replicate the beauty, his contact with nature is an act of thankfulness.

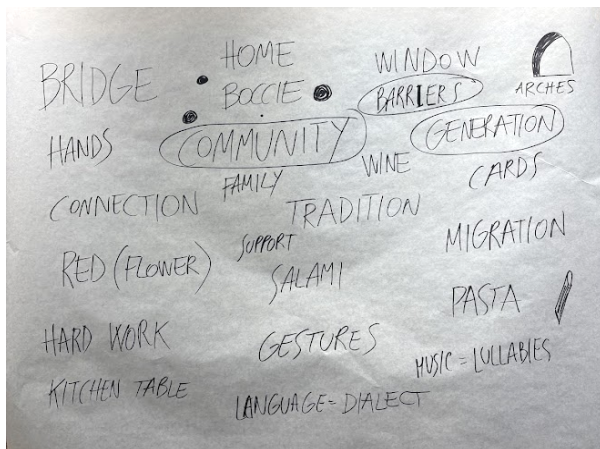
The next part of the interview was focused on the community that is to be impacted by the mural project. I was curious about what Carlo is hoping to learn from the mural experience. He responded by first being very thankful for the opportunity that Carey Watters provided him and then exploring the uniqueness and magic within the project itself. “I am expecting the unexpected,” Carlo said, highlighting his excitement for such an experience. I was interested in how this project might lead to other community projects. Carlo said something very profound, “Painting a wall is not just always painting a wall, it’s creating a portal for fantasy.” The influence of altering a structure with art is abounding. He thinks this project will be a nice example of how fantasy can shape reality and inspire others.

My closing question was inquiring about how the CBL course instructed by Carey Watters would benefit him. There were many things that came to mind, like making connections, being interviewed, and the opportunity to interact with reality and the environment in a different way. I opened the door for Carlo to have a closing thought or statement, and he just wanted to express how happy he was to experience this project and collaborate with the community.

Students in Carey Watter's Digital Portfolio class, the senior capstone course for graduating graphic design majors, have all been collaborating alongside Carlo for several weeks now to create the mural's official design. The class is also considered a Community-Based Learning course (CBL), which gives an opportunity for students to apply what they learn to real-world experiences that serve their communities, hence Carlo Giardina and the mural project. Student Carly Edwards has taken multiple CBL courses throughout her time here at Parkside, saying that "It's good talking to professionals; you don't usually get that in school which is a plus side to CBL courses". Another student in the class brought up another great point regarding benefits of CBL courses:

It's sort of practical experience without having to really worry about getting rejected from the job or the community partner. While their expectations were higher, the community partner wasn't like - they already found us someone to work with so we didn't really have to worry about finding that person and getting that professional practice, it was just already there and ready for us (Hannah Pautsch).

Hannah also mentioned that working with Carlo and her classmates has allowed her to experiment with trial and error, exploration, and to overall have greater freedom and more fun than some of her other graphic design projects. In terms of the process that helped spark inspiration and ideas for the mural, students Hydea Ali and Pelumi Ajayi talked about two exercises they engaged in to help spark their creativity. In her Interactive Design class, Hydea stated that Carlo came in with his guitar and they did an exercise where he would play a tune, and students were required to choose a color they thought of when hearing it. Then they would have to "name" that color, or associate an object or term with the color such as "blue jay" or "red lipstick". Finally, they would take their results and recite it as a poem out loud to the class.



Pelumi mentioned another exercise they do in the Digital Portfolio course: "We also do these word banks where you just write a ton of words and try to make connections between them. You name a word, and you need ten words connected to *that* word, and you try to make a big web". These exertions prepared the students to have ideas to come to class with, and the design is now in the process of being made and finalized.

*Lauren Landry's work is page 1, Janet Jurado page 2