

J Journal

Spring 2014 ■ Volume 41 ■ Issue Number 2

re·e·vance
noun \ˈre-lə-vən(t)s\

Hands-on
that

Learning
matters.

Uncertainty + Spontaneity + Empowerment = CA Art Festival Redux

How do you teach a second grader to sit with uncertainty?

Colorado Academy's re-energized, all-school art show, happening this May, will test students' critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity, says CA's art and music faculty, as well as the confidence it takes to be comfortable with the unknown. "I don't think any of us knows the outcome," says Lower School music instructor Alicia Knox.

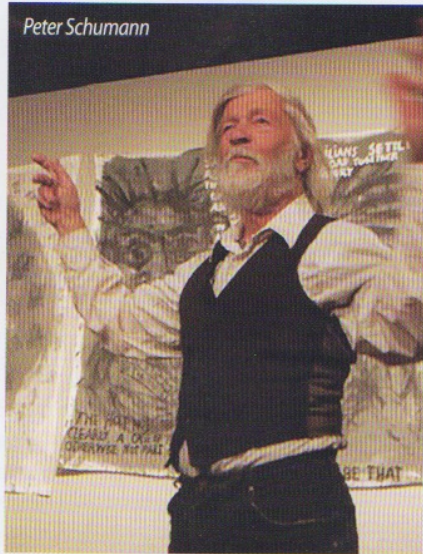
The art show is being invigorated by the influence of Vermont's famous Bread and Puppet Theater. Last summer, a group of CA teachers traveled there to take part in the theater's 50th anniversary and are bringing



Don't miss it: All-School Art Festival
Monday, May 5, 2014 5:30 p.m. • CA Campus

Performance Stage on the steps of the Schotters Building

On-campus dinner options available for purchase, with a portion of the proceeds benefitting the CA Parent Association



Peter Schumann



Fifth grade students work in art class on a seven-foot tall mask for the Art Festival.

that influence back to CA. Bread & Puppet, founded by European artist Peter Schumann, is one of the oldest, nonprofit, self-supporting theatrical companies in the country, and it has served as a major inspiration for theaters and artists around the world. It uses puppetry, including 50-foot figures, to tell stories without dialogue. Music, movement, and sheer scale of the puppets serve as the main source of communication to the audience. CA fifth graders have been working on a 7' x 6' papier mâché puppet face. They will also be working to use puppetry with hands to demonstrate the concept of gratitude.

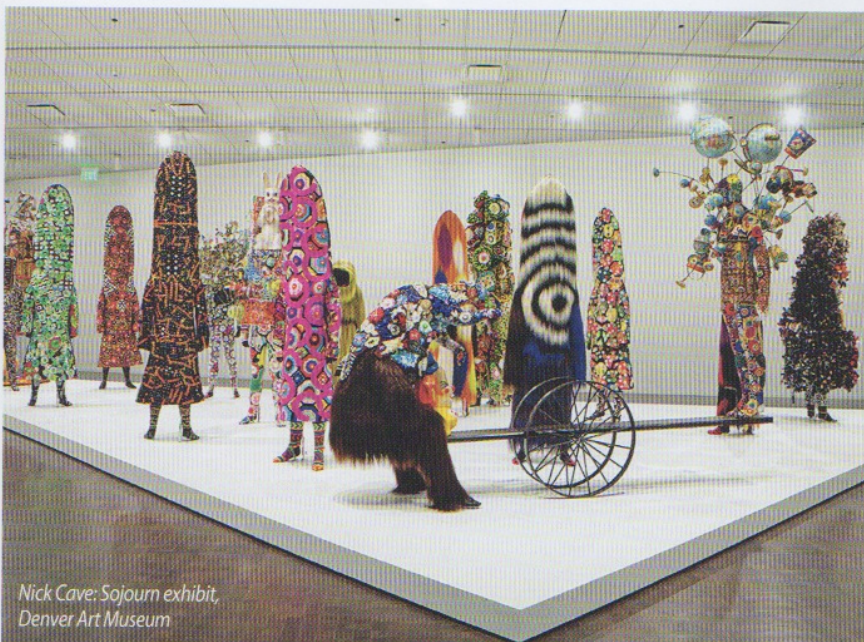
Another creative influence is coming from Nick Cave, an American fabric sculptor, dancer, and performance artist. He is best known for his Soundsuits, wearable fabric sculptures that are bright, whimsical, and otherworldly, and were recently on display at the Denver Art Museum. CA alumnae **Tess Vigil '00**, now a clothing designer, and **Tara Bardeen '99**, educator and Art Museum volunteer, are working with the students, as well.

Second grade students are creating their own sound suits made from buttons, bells, and other household "found" objects. They, too, are learning to communicate a story without dialogue.

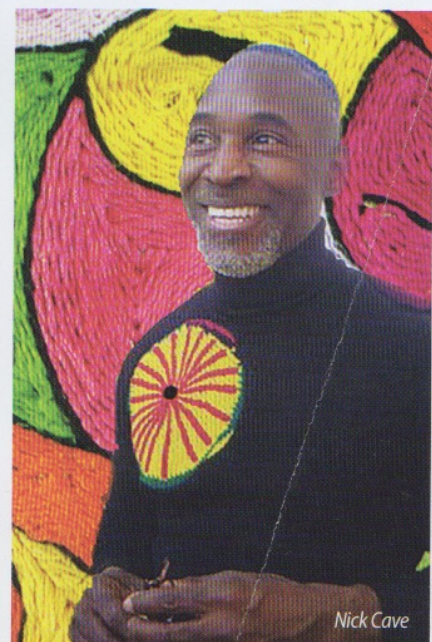
Their task has been to imagine and emulate the sound that an animal might make moving through a West African jungle — rustling through the leaves or slithering along a jungle floor. Using the artistry and sound of their costumes, they are creating dance movements that will tell a story. "All of these elements must exist together — the theatre, music, and visual arts," says Lower School music instructor and CA alum **Nora Palenchar Golden '00**. "The work must be intentional, discovered, and explored," she says.

Says Bardeen, "By asking second graders to combine several disparate fields (art, music and clothing), we challenge them to be flexible in their understanding of each area and to see connections where they might not have expected them. Through regular practice and engaging, empowering projects, these students will be at home in a world that demands they be flexible and able to see the world from a variety of angles."

Empowerment is key, says art instructor Carrie Diehl. "It is very student-driven. For example, my students will create sea creatures out of cardboard and paint, and then deliver those as thematic props to the drama students, who will then have to come up with the performance." Admittedly, say the teachers, the end result may be less polished, but definitely more spontaneous. "That is the point, that is what it should be," says Knox. "Through that process, they make it concrete for themselves."



Nick Cave: Sojourn exhibit, Denver Art Museum



Nick Cave