

Gigi Antoni

Remarks - Young Masters Awards Ceremony, DMA Horchow Auditorium

Tuesday, February 25, 2014

Hello, I'm Gigi Antoni, and I thank you so much for having me at this reception. First and foremost, I want to extend my sincerest praise to the outstanding young artists who make up this exhibition.

From my vantage point, you are the next generation of big minds who will influence our city, state, and even world more than you might even know right now.

I'm appreciative of the Dallas Museum of Art for hosting this exhibit. It's so important to highlight the capabilities of DFW students, especially by one of the city's most revered cultural institutions.

I'd also like to thank Deborah Moore and the O'Donnell Foundation, who support this program. Some of you might know that Edith O'Donnell is a co-founder of my organization, Big Thought.

Organizationally, there is one tool in our toolbox that we use in every single one of our programs: The arts. There are a few reasons for this, beyond the fact that the subject itself is enormously helpful for broadening minds and hearts, and to develop well-rounded individuals.

In addition to this intrinsic value, the arts offer multiple benefits that are essential to help all people succeed.

The Search Institute, who measures student motivation, has said that the arts are almost always at the top of students' list of activities that they love to do in school.

When students find something that sparks their passions, they are more likely to invest in learning, and not just in the arts. Engaged students are the ones who graduate, go to college, and find a job that they love.

The arts also develop an incredible array of cognitive skills that that young adults will use in virtually every aspect of their life. They imagine new possibilities. They communicate with peers and through their works. They learn to complete a project. They display their work and receive criticism. They work to be better and better.

Today, we celebrate and admire the results of arts learning, as we take in the incredible visual artwork, writing, and composing of these young masters.

Their pieces are beautiful. The quality of their craft is truly remarkable, and worthy of every single superlative that they received.

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But as an educator, I am equally as floored by the process that each of these students underwent to achieve the final product. It is in the artistic process where students learn the skills that are foundational for success in college and career.

I said before that I think that within this room is the next generation of big thinkers. That wasn't just a platitude.

What you've accomplished today is the result of habits of mind – resilience, ingenuity, passion, and striving for excellence – that will allow you to succeed whether you want to be an artist or a congressperson.

In my many years of experience, I can tell you that excellence is not particularly common. It's also not something that can be unlearned.

Once a student has had a taste of what it's like to have done something truly extraordinary, the hunger only grows.

The young people in this program will feed that hunger in their colleges and jobs, seeking out the next idea or right answer, in order to grow their excellence. They will want to perform better and become more, in every task at hand. This is the power of the artistic process. This is the power of these young masters.

I foresee bright futures for all involved in this exhibit, and congratulate you on all you have done today, and what you will do in the future.

Thank you so much for having me.