

Out With Art

Student art in Richmond has gone out on the streets to brighten the city and build support for arts programs.

DALE NELSON

To get art outdoors and out front in education, the Richmond, Virginia, schools have created two unique projects: "Art in the Open" and "Art Bus."

"Art in the Open" was a billboard display of original student art to recognize national Youth Art Month in March 1982. Reproductions of the original art of 21 elementary and secondary students were spread across billboards throughout the city. The project was a cooperative venture among advertising agencies, local businesses, school adopters, and the schools.

Ranging from the spontaneous expressions of a preschooler to the graphically planned and carefully drawn work of middle and high school students, each billboard delivered a message about a particular school or program. Many of the messages encouraged support for arts education: "The Arts Are in First Position" and "Learning is Fun at Southampton Elementary School."

To further publicize the project, a poster announcing "Art in the Open" was distributed in the community. On the poster was printed a blank miniature billboard, which 2,500 students in the schools filled in with their original art. The poster also gave credit to the businesses, adopters of the schools, and parent and professional organizations who made the project possible. Certificates with photographs of their billboards were presented to the student artists and the sponsors to recognize their contributions.

The project was a public relations success story for Richmond's schools.

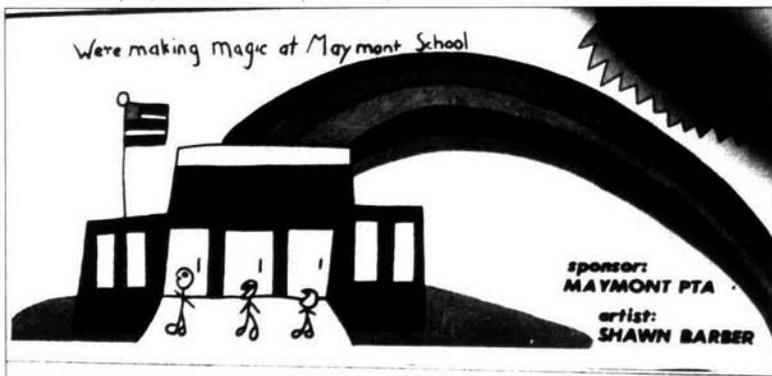
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Coverage by television, radio, and newspapers called attention to the billboards "blossoming" along city streets and was a source of pride to students, their families, and the greater school-community. Ten of the 21 students appeared on television programs and news segments on "Art in the Open."

In the "Art Bus" project, 600 pieces of original art by Richmond Public School students were exhibited on the interior advertising spaces of 25 city buses. The project, also a cooperative

venture, was the brainchild of an organizer of "June Jubilee," a visual and performing arts festival held annually the first weekend in June in downtown Richmond. City buses advertised the event six weeks prior to the festival.

Bringing art outdoors has informed the public about the arts programs in the schools and recognized the work of young artists throughout the city. It has also communicated the joy of self-expression and generated excitement for arts education in Richmond schools. □



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