

QCCC NEWS

January 2007

The Queens Civics Collaboration of CUNY

EL/Civics Visits the Metropolitan Museum of Art

The Metropolitan Museum was the temporary home for the *Americans in Paris* exhibit. This show of 100 paintings from 35 different artists (1860-1900) is a collection of works by American artists who moved to Paris. These artists moved to Paris because it was the center of the art world. Mary Cassatt, Thomas Eakins, John Singer Sargent, James McNeil Whistler, and Winslow Homer are some of the most famous artists of this group.

These artists were attracted to Paris because of the city's famous art schools and studios. They painted everyday scenes of life in the city. Paris has many beautiful gardens and these gardens were a frequent subject of the artists' work. They also painted pictures of the nightlife in Paris. These included people at the movies, going to plays, eating at cafes and attending concerts; these artists were extremely interested in all aspects of Parisian life. The *Americans in Paris* exhibit looks at why Paris was so central to the art world and how the city influenced the work of American artists living there.



In The Luxembourg Gardens, John Singer Sargent



Madam X, John Singer Sargent

EL/Civics students used the *Americans in Paris* exhibit in their study of the English language in a variety of ways. They spent time studying the paintings and learning background and biographical information about the artists. We also had a lecturer from the museum, Ines Powell, who led a discussion on some of the more important images in the show. The culmination of this work was a visit on Tuesday January 23, 2007 to the museum. At the museum, the students had an opportunity to see the works they had spent time studying.

This collaboration is co-sponsored by the New York State Education Department, Queensborough Community College, Queens College, and The CUNY School of Law Immigrant Initiatives Program in conjunction with the Office of Continuing Education, Arts and Business Development.

After the visit to The Met, the students wrote about their experiences. Below are some of their unedited responses.

I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with my classmates yesterday. Wow! So big building. First we visited paintings of Americans in Paris (1860-1900). We knew a little thing about these artists because teacher introduced them. I felt the artists deep love for life. ~ Xiao, Susan Weiss's class

Yesterday January 23, 2007 teacher Scott brought our two classes to the Metropolitan Museum. We met the classmates at the 7 train station entrance in front of Old Navy. We left at 9:15am and we arrived at 10am. I saw that museum building very big then, we went inside the building. I saw a lot of paintings that I never seen before. I thought that painters very smart and they spend a lot of time to practice. ~ Alice, Susan Weiss's class

Yesterday we take the subway to go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was my first time at the Met. I saw the best painting in my whole life. ~ Xae, Scott Reccardi's class

This is my experience about the trip to the museum yesterday. I was very happy because that's something different for me. I see that Egyptian exhibit. ~ Blanca, Susan Weiss's class



Little Girl in a Blue Armchair, Mary Cassatt

Yesterday, we went to the museum. I was the first time been there. Because the teacher already taught something to us, we could enjoy the painting. I liked the artists, Mary Cassatt. I paid the attention to the painting which we saw them in class. I looked the 'Madam X' carefully. We talked about her dress with my classmates. However, I also watched all the oil on panel very well. I remembered some wonderful painting. At the end, I think I will go back to the museum more time in the future.

~ Sandy, Susan Weiss's class

Yesterday our class went to the Metropolitan Museum. It is a very famous museum in the world. That is my first time went there, everyone was new for me... First, we saw a lot of Mary Cassatt's painting. That is my first time seeing famous painter's paintings, that is very interesting for me. We saw some painting from her. But I liked one of her, the name was 'the girl sat on the blue armchair.' She drew the little girl looked like just woke up and a little dog sat on the other sofa. We saw other painting the name is 'madam x.' The painter was Sargent. Was a big painting. The lady stood near a tea stand and wore a elegant black long dress.

~ Salina, Susan Weiss's class

(Naomi Wanjau is a QCC college student who was studying for the ACT placement exam during the January 2007 term. She participated in a service learning program whose aim was to pair up college students with adult literacy students. Naomi, after tutoring in the QCC program and studying intensively, passed the ACT test).

After attending class at Prince Street I was able to provide different skills to the students from what I have learned from ACT Reading workshop. After the tutor handed out the painting papers in the class, I was able to go through the paintings together with the students and guess the hypothesis of the paintings.

I also tried to look for the readers / artist meaning of the paintings. I can say it was similar to what I learned in the ACT Reading Workshop by looking for the main idea from the author's passages. Through the paintings, I helped the students to learn the new different things and understand them rather than looking at them as colored drawings without meaning. ~Naomi Wanjau

Some other QCC Adult Literacy initiatives for spring 2007:

- ❖ Collaboration as a community based organization with the American Association for Community Colleges "Broadening Horizons Through Service Learning."
- ❖ The implementation of a \$25,000 grant from City Council Member, David Weprin.
- ❖ A continuation of our ongoing pilot program with IBM's Reading Companion software.
- ❖ A pilot collaboration with The Nassau County Art Museum, located in Roslyn, New York, to expand visual literacy surrounding a spring exhibit entitled "From Rembrandt to Rosenquist."

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