

feature



Creating a Better World

American artist Sally Curcio's Bubbles series artworks, domed fantasy world dioramas created with colorful beads and recycled objects have been inspiring children the world over to create a futuristic world that they want to see. Sally speaks to Viki Shah on her idea of empowering children with her 'miniature worlds', during her visit to Art Dubai as the lead artist of this year's Sheikha Manal Little Artists Program: "Creating New Worlds".



How do you encourage creativity in children from an early age? How do you channelize their creativity and imagination to something meaningful?

Children are naturally imaginative and creative. Giving them a supportive environment with art materials and presenting them with new concepts opens their mind's in a variety of ways to channel their creativity.

How do we encourage the use of simple materials available around us?

Children have the gift of transforming everyday materials in their imagination. I find it is often the adults that need to loosen up to see the possibility of creating with everyday objects. In my sculpture and in the workshops I lead, I take everyday objects and transform them into art. Perhaps my art will be an inspiration to others to use the simple materials around them to create their own form of artistic expression.

How do you create an awareness of environmental and sustainability issues through art?

I like my art to be visually pleasing and engaging. It draws you in first and then raises questions. For instance, with the "New Perspective" collaborative bottle cap art installation at Art Dubai, each

student added an array of bottle caps to an evolving work of art to create a beautiful design. The fact that the bottle caps were upcycled into art reminds us that we need to find ways to reuse the excess of materials we are producing. People from around the globe need to work together and think creatively about the ways to sustain our planet.

'Creating New Worlds' is your theme of your workshops at Art Dubai; how do you feel that the fast growing urbanscape of Dubai inspires kids to create their vision for tomorrow? What message does it give to the children?

The urbanscape of Dubai is exciting and inspirational. It opens our minds to new possibilities, both in architecture and ideas. I like my workshops to empower the children with the thought that they are the architects of the future. In the workshop called "Futuristic City", the students collaborated to build inventive towers and buildings that contributed to a future city. While having fun, the students learned that team work, cooperation, and creativity make for building a beautiful futuristic city.

Why do you choose to work more with children and teenagers? Do you learn from them?

I love to see the way children and »





teenagers think. They are creative in different ways and they inspire me. I'm always delighted by each individual's form of expression and creativity. Both children and teenagers have a lot to say about the meaning and significance of their creations. I was impressed with the comments students made about their own and others' work. It showed their focus and dedication about the subject matter.

Can art be fun, or does it always have to have a purpose?

For me, my art is always fun, and it also has a deep message. It is part of my DNA as an artist to create beautiful art that draws the viewer in and then gives the option to delve deeper into the meaning of the work. For example, with the "New Perspective" bottle cap wall installation, someone could see the colors and shapes and think it looks beautiful, but then questions can arise. Why are there so many bottle caps? Can we recycle them? What are the issues with mass production and consumption? How is plastic impacting our environment?

Can art encourage people to gather together, take time for reflection, to create a community among people and the natural world?

Art does encourage people to gather and reflect. In my workshops I bring people of all ages and backgrounds together to create. It is a nice way to form a community and to make meaningful connections. The workshops inspire people to share their ideas and to open up a conversation.

When so much of our present world needs changing, do you think that creativity can help create the future we want to live in? Bring together the factual and imaginary as a tool for change? How?

Creativity and imagination are exactly what we need to create the future we want to live in. Life can go on automatic pilot and it takes breaking out of the habitual, believing things can be different, and brainstorming up new ideas to make change. Artists of all forms, like writers, filmmakers, fine artists present ideas to the world that can facilitate change. Art can be a mirror for viewer/





public that addresses the issues of the world we currently live in and it can also plant suggestions for a future world. Creativity opens our minds up to what is possible and holds the potential to make a dramatic impact.

**What does the workshop aim to achieve?
Your message for Dubai?**

I am honored to have been selected as Lead Artist for the Sheikh Manal Little Artists Program.

My program in Dubai "Creating New Worlds" consists of three different activities that aim to empower children in fun creative ways and to plant the seed that they are

the architects of our future world both in thought and physical form. In the "Miniature Worlds" workshop I invite them to think of their creations as prototypes for actual buildings. The activities in the "Futuristic World" and "New Perspective" motivate invention, require cooperation, encourage new perspectives, and open up exploration in to how everyday materials can be configured to create stimulating art while also opening ideas for new imagined worlds.

My aim is that students leave the workshops with a new sense of agency. Ideally, they come to see themselves as being part of a solution to a better world. ✨



ABOUT SALLY CURCIO:

Inspired by the enchantment of snow globes, childhood memories of imagined worlds, and ecological concerns, Sally Curcio captures iconic and fantastic places in her Bubble Sculptures.

The Bubble Sculptures are miniature worlds made from thousands of brilliantly colored glass beads, as well as found objects, housed under transparent domes. Curcio creates actual geographies like Jackie Onassis Reservoir in New York City; mythical realms like Atlantis; and imagined worlds like Metropolis.

Sally Curcio has exhibited her work in galleries, museums, and for public installations throughout the United States and internationally. Her work has been commissioned for numerous private and public collections, notably the Hassenfeld Children's Hospital at New York University's Langone Hospital in New York City in 2018.

Find out more on www.sallycurcio.com

