

Finding Truth through Art

Students at Saint Joseph High School teamed with the University of Notre Dame to participate in a unique educational project based on the work of Ecuadorian artist Oswaldo Guayasamín.

The project started with a request from the University of Notre Dame Romance Language Department to participate in Guayasamín's Art in Motion Project. Guayasamín's mural *Ecuador*, commissioned by the government of Ecuador, depicts the history and identity of the country and its people. Spanish teacher Ricardo Rios and art teachers Kim Coleman and Jennifer Firestone prepared lessons which are now included in *Art in Motion/Guayasamín's Ecuador Unframed: An Interdisciplinary Resource Packet for Teachers*. Rios' Spanish class incorporated the project into their study of art and culture.

Kim Coleman created a project for her digital design class to produce a mural intending to allegorize a social issue. "It was important to narrow the allegory to one social issue. I decided to use illegal immigration of children and how it affects the family," explained Mrs. Coleman. She lectured on Guayasamín's biography and his work, focusing on emotion and empathy. Each student was assigned to create two 6"x18" panels which were then combined with the work of three different art classes to make a 4'x12' mural.

Drawing teacher Jennifer Firestone introduced Guayasamín to her students by showing images of the artist and his works. "They read a biography to gain better

understanding of why he created the works. They read articles that described the social and political issues that were going on in Ecuador that influenced Guayasamín to create the mural," she noted.

The artist's grandson Pablo Guayasamín Madriñan, Director of Fundación Guayasamín, visited the school to view the mural and talk to the students about his grandfather's legacy.

Mrs. Coleman hopes that this project opened the eyes of her students to recognize, through the prejudice and discrimination experienced by the artist, the similar plight of the "new" illegal children in America.

Junior Joe Miller said, "When I saw the emotions in his work, I really began to research the topic of illegal immigration. I wanted my work to express what I felt." As a result of his research, Miller wants to see people come together and work for a solution.

Mrs. Firestone hopes that her students will recognize Guayasamín's works and understand the meaning and inspiration behind them. "I learned about the social and political issues Ecuador has faced. I have a greater appreciation for Guayasamín's work after learning more about his personal life and Ecuador's social and political issues. I was impressed with my students and their ability to put their feelings on paper," said Firestone.



Joe Miller shares the meaning and inspiration of his panel with his classmates.