

From Classroom to Home: Promoting Equitable Art Access at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

Teacher Fellows

Teacher Fellows are distinguished educators from the Houston metro area who have demonstrated leadership skills and a passion for innovative teaching and learning methods in their classrooms. Established in 2011, the Teacher Fellows program creates collaborative partnerships to develop new approaches to interdisciplinary classroom curriculum, school and teacher resources, and professional development opportunities at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston. The teachers are selected through an application and interview process, as well as recommendations by school leadership.

Working exclusively with HISD visual arts teachers, the 2021–24 Teacher Fellows for *From Classroom to Home: Promoting Equitable Art Access at the MFAH* will co-develop new culturally responsive object-based learning curriculum resources using works of art from the Museum’s modern and contemporary art collections, as well as explore new ways that the Museum can work with the broader school community.



Raquel Dao
Jane Long Academy

Raquel Dao obtained a bachelor of fine arts from the University of Texas at San Antonio. She is a Folk and Neo-Pop Surrealist who juxtapositions folklore, expression, and identity. She uses different mediums and vivid colors to have the viewers escape their current state of reality.



Coretta Dill
B.C. Elmore Elementary School

Coretta Dill is an artist, teacher, and designer, not necessarily in that order. She was voted “Most Talented” in high school because she could sing, dance, and play sports—never for art. She always knew that she was an artist like Beyoncé, not an artist like Frida. Now, she is known to be an art teacher. She finds that her thinking, reading, experimentation, and exploration is all directed toward better teaching of art and design, and not exclusively toward better personal studio performance. She certainly maintains a broader view of art than she would if she was not teaching and delights in it.

Christina Gonzalez

Meyerland Performing & Visual Arts Middle School



Christina Gonzalez is a native Texan, born and raised in Houston, where she earned a bachelor of arts in fine arts and art education from the University of Houston. She found her calling when she began her career at Houston Independent School District's Meyerland Performing and Visual Arts Middle School, where she could combine her talent with teaching. She takes pride in seeing her students grow as young artists, many of whom have won prestigious awards at local, regional, and national art competitions. Gonzalez believes that learning is a lifetime process. Being a product of Houston Independent School District herself, she continuously seeks personal growth as an artist and as an educator. Her artwork has been exhibited in the National Museum of Mexican Art for the Texas Sor Juana Ines del la Cruz Festival: A Tribute to Mexican Women. In 2008 she was awarded the Fund for Teachers Fellowship where she traveled to Italy and Greece to study classical and contemporary European art and architecture. As an accomplished educator, she has served as a lead art presenter for multiple workshops at local and national conferences and is involved in developing curricula and arts integration for secondary visual arts in Houston Independent School District. Gonzalez was recognized as the Houston Independent School District Visual Art Teacher of the Year in 2018.

Maya Imani Watson

Booker T. Washington HS & The High School for Engineering Professions



An artist, educator, and proud mother, Maya Imani Watson has worked in the field of museum administration and arts education for over 20 years. A product of the Houston Independent School District, having graduated from the High School for Performing and Visual Arts with a concentration in art, Maya received her bachelor of arts in fine arts from Mount Holyoke College and did graduate work at the State University of New York, Binghamton, in the master of business administration and arts administration program. She worked for over 13 years at Texas Southern University, serving as the museum registrar, education coordinator, museum graphics specialist, and museum archivist. Currently, she is a teaching artist at the historic Booker T. Washington High School and the High School for Engineering Professions. Maya Imani Watson is the yearbook manager and strongly believes art has the capacity to tell the story of a people, empowering youth and humanity.

Shamatha Jackson

Blackshear Elementary School



Shamatha Jackson currently works at Blackshear Elementary School as a visual art educator. Shamatha graduated from Texas Southern University with a bachelor of arts, and Grand Canyon University with a master of arts. As a gifted-and-talented visual art educator, Jackson specializes in teaching scholars how to create and appreciate art in spectacular ways. During the 2020–21 school year, she served as a campus team leader and led their ancillary team during a time when many campuses were facing challenges. With her leadership, combined with the support of her ancillary team, they successfully and effectively taught their scholars online and face-to-face simultaneously. Shamatha strives to serve with great integrity and excellent character. She is an active volunteer in her community, where she works on projects with her church, Crossing Community, teen girls mentoring group, Infinite Essence, events and stewarding with Sistat with Jeeps club, and the Third Ward project with Blackshear Elementary. Shamatha lives by her favorite quote by Maya Angelou: "If you're going to live, leave a legacy. Make a mark on the world that can't be erased."



Neda Khan

DeBakey High School

Neda Khan is an art educator and advocate, mentor, and artist. She teaches art and photography at DeBakey High School for Health Professions in Houston Independent School District. In addition to expanding the art program, she designed several murals for the campus. She has a passion for mentoring students to develop their artistic voice, escalate their artistic experience, and encourage participation in local and national contests. She was selected as the Teacher of the Year and district finalist in 2012 and 2017, as well as Houston Independent School District's Outstanding Asian Teacher of 2011. Upon receiving a Fund for Teachers grant, she traveled to Italy and Greece to experience classical and contemporary European art and architecture. She has presented workshops to educators nationwide and has developed curricula for visual art and arts integration. Neda has served as the visual art mentor for the "Big Us Project" and the "Big Us Project 2," programs that provide refugees and underrepresented immigrants access to the arts and a public platform for them to create, perform, and showcase their own work. As a freelance graphic designer, her clients have included international corporations and local businesses. She has also created artwork for books. Neda is fluent in English and Urdu, and holds a bachelor of arts in fine arts and art education with a minor in art history from the University of Houston. She collaborated as a 2018–21 High School Teacher Fellow and is excited to be working with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, again.



Christa Martinez-Chavez

Energy High School

Christa Martinez is a born-and-raised Houstonian who grew up in Second Ward. She attended the High School for Performing and Visual Arts for art, received her bachelor of arts in engineering and studio art at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania, and then went on to the University of the Arts in Philadelphia for her master's in industrial design. She currently teaches students the critical thinking and problem solving that comes with art at Energy Institute High School. Outside of work, she is a tattoo artist and loves to support local musicians and the arts!



Luz Martinez

Frank Black Middle School

Born in Mexico and raised in Houston's East End, Luz Martinez is a blend between the vibrancy of Houston and the rich culture of her Mexican heritage. Her small beginnings didn't stop her from reaching her personal goals. From using a pencil sharpened with her dad's pocketknife to using a digital pencil, the perseverance and work ethic that Luz cultivated helped her as an educator. In her 10th year in education, she can't imagine any other role that combines her passion for art while supporting her community at the same time. Luz believes in the power of the arts and the bridge that it creates between all groups of people.



Rosalinda Martinez

Park Place Elementary School

Rosalinda Martinez is an elementary art teacher at Park Place Elementary School. Teaching is her first passion and being an art teacher infuses the pedagogy. Art is everything else in between. For the past few years, Rosalinda has been teaching art to the most diverse, hardworking, and creative students. At Park Place, teaching isn't just teaching, instead it's like being a superhero surrounded by many more unique superhero students. A native Houstonian, she has had the privilege to teach near her childhood neighborhood. Rosalinda is also a scholar from southeast Houston Independent School District schools, and an alumnus from the University of Houston. Being a teacher comes naturally to Rosalinda, who continually searches for ways to enhance her learning. By seeking more learning opportunities and experiences, she can bring those experiences to life for students in the classroom. Her greatest accomplishment has been teaching and seeing students' accomplishments, especially discovering potential artists in the making. Through teaching comes the greatest validation for truly making an impact on the community and on future artists, state leaders, and teachers, inspiring and motivating them to follow their dreams.



Ellen Phillips

Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts

Ellen Phillips is an artist and educator in Houston, Texas. Phillips currently teaches at the Kinder High School for the Performing and Visual Arts across grade levels 9–12 and is the 9th-grade-level advocate. She has a passion for building community and working in environments that encourage growth through the arts. Fall 2021 begins her third year teaching on faculty within the visual art department. Phillips received her bachelor of fine arts in painting from the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA). Within personal studio work, Phillips explores the concept of multiples through works on paper, sculpture, photography, and text.



Summer Quinones

Travis Elementary School

Summer Quinones is known by her students as "Mrs. Q," and she is the art teacher at Travis Elementary School. She graduated from University of Houston in 2019 with a bachelor of arts in art with a minor in education. During her time in college, her focus was graphic design and printmaking. She began her teaching career at Benbrook Elementary School, located in Houston, in August 2019. She was nominated for Houston Independent School District's Rookie Teacher of the Year for the 2019-20 school year. Teaching art to children is truly a passion of hers. Allowing for every child to discover that they are an artist is her mission! As a practicing artist and art educator, she believes in the importance in finding inspiration in the community we live in. By working with local practicing artists within the community, she can create a space for her students to see themselves grow.



Thomas Samson

Frank Black Middle School

Thomas Samson is a U.S. Marine veteran with a bachelor of arts in art from the University of Houston. A printer at heart with a Surrealist mindset, Samson lets his creativity come from within. Drawing inspiration from anything—a fond memory, a blank piece of paper, or paint on a bus station—Thomas loves to break down ideas into simple and non-contextual forms and replicate them over and over until a pattern or a new meaning emerges. His mindset is “experiment with experimental ideas and see where they go!”



Nicole Svoronos

Scarborough High School

A 19-year veteran art educator, Nicole Svoronos has enjoyed being a part of the community and sharing art making with her students. Nicole has had students become art teachers, art makers, and creative problem solvers. Art has been a part of her life since she was small. Her immigrant father enjoyed collecting art and also gave her family the experience of the opera. These worlds opened her eyes to a place that she wanted to let her students know that is accessible to them. Humanity’s collective voice and story is what is important for future generations. The students’ visual voice is important and people want to “hear” it. Nicole loves being an educator and seeing others feel successful is her catalyst to be a better teacher. In her free time last year, she and her partner took a road trip, which included Crystal Bridges in Arkansas and the Red River Gorge in Kentucky.



Michelle Vassallo Alves

Sharpstown High School

Michelle Vassallo Alves is a curious mix of visual artist, art educator, and chemical engineer. She was born and raised in Brazil, lived in the Middle East for three years, and moved to Houston in 2013. Vassallo holds a bachelor of science in chemical engineering from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and worked in the engineering field for one decade. She is a self-taught representational artist interested in mythological narratives, working primarily in graphite and charcoal. Vassallo is currently pursuing her master’s in education in curriculum and instruction, art education, at the University of Houston, and this is her first year teaching high-school visual arts. She is thrilled with the opportunity to co-create with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and to promote a strong connection between the school, community, and Museum!



Jo Ann von der Haar

Deady Middle School

Known in the academic world as Jo Ann von der Haar, her students call her “Dr. Art.” She has a bachelor of arts in art history, a master of arts in curriculum instruction, and a doctorate in multicultural education. For the past 25 years, she has been with Houston Independent School District as an art teacher, after-school coordinator, and magnet coordinator. Additionally, Jo Ann spent three years with the Bureau of Indian Affairs at Pueblo of Laguna Reservation. She has always been interested in art of various styles—simply being surrounded by any form of art is inspiring. Her media choices are dependent on what she is creating—portraits in pastel, installation projects either in paint or paper, as in origami. Art is a key component of the world and sharing that is a wonderful creative experience.



Lizeth Yanez

Mark White Elementary School

Lizeth Yanez was born in Mexico City, and her parents moved to Houston when she was one year old. She moved to Mexico for high school and college. She studied at the School of Fine Arts of Queretaro for a degree in graphic design. She lived in Mexico for nine years after she finished her degree. She worked as a freelance graphic designer and was translating and interpreting for Procter and Gamble. She then moved back to Houston and began working for a non-profit organization, Catholic Charities, and for the children’s U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement immigration center, where she was called “teacher.” Lizeth began collaborating with several teachers who motivated her to become a teacher. So she did. She loves her job as an art teacher, and she looks forward every day to helping motivate kids and being there for them in any way they need—hopefully inspiring them to become artists themselves.