

Mount Holyoke College Art Museum partners with local schools

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Photo by Laura Shea

The [Mount Holyoke College Art Museum](#) is enriching the lives of more than just the College's own students — it has also welcomed students from area schools, particularly those in lesser-served areas. An art and identity program for students from the Springfield Renaissance School, a STEM-focused magnet high school, was led by museum intern **Relyn Myrthil '19**, who worked with the Springfield students, engaging them in conversations about race, class, gender and other aspects of their identities in the context of exhibitions on display at the Museum. They also took part in a weekly hands-on workshop, using techniques they had studied in the gallery to create their own stories of identity. Likewise, a group from LightHouse Holyoke, a small alternative learning school in Holyoke that has a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics) bent, spent time at the Museum learning to lead art-related discussions in front of their peers. They also worked at the [Fimbel Maker & Innovation Lab](#), with which the Museum enjoys a rich ongoing partnership.

"The students got to see the collaboration between their STEM studies and art, and how their calculations — and making sure to measure twice, cut once — can be used in a creative way that's not just engineering and computer science," says Myrthil, adding that observing these groups of students learn to interact with art and each other helped her become a better communicator as well.

A music major and art history minor, Myrthil was a Posse scholar whose own introduction to the Museum wasn't until her sophomore year, when she and other Posse scholars were invited for a visual thinking strategies workshop largely intended to be a bonding exercise. Myrthil was surprised at the content and depth of the discussions. She had been expecting to hear about an artist's technical skills and about the process of creating art, like how fine details are depicted in a painting, for instance. Instead, she says, "We talked about Kara Walker and the history of the Civil War. It was a very interdisciplinary experience for us, and it 100% inspired me to go back to the Museum for the next two-and-a-half years."

[Learn about Mount Holyoke's ten years of the Teaching with Art program.](#)

—Written by Sarah Zobel '88

Sarah Zobel '88 is a Vermont-based writer and editor whose work focuses on health and medicine, education, and housing and homelessness.

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