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“TWO RIVERS” ART SHOW OPENS AT AFS GALLERY

A new exhibit, entitled “Two Rivers”, showcases the collaborative environmental artwork of local elementary school students from McKinley and Santa Barbara Charter Schools. Inspired by the work of Artist Andy Goldsworthy, these young artists have produced a series of art and documentation focusing on their experience of Santa Barbara’s watersheds. Their journals, photographs and collaborative artworks will be on display from May 16 until May 31, 2008, at the AFS Gallery, upstairs at Art From Scrap, at 302 East Cota Street in downtown Santa Barbara. An artist reception will be held on Friday, May 16th from 5 to 7pm.

The Two Rivers project is an initiative of Laura Denny (a past Artist in Residence at Art From Scrap) and Angela Lang (a past Environmental Educator at Art From Scrap), directors of newly established art programs at Santa Barbara Charter School and McKinley Elementary School, respectively. Brought together by AFS’s Green Schools Education Director Tahara Ezrahti, Denny and Lang conceived the project as a way to introduce their fourth and fifth graders to conceptual art and artistic collaboration, at the same time building on the students’ awareness of the impact of pollution on the environment.

“The McKinley students began by watching the Andy Goldsworthy documentary ‘Rivers and Tides’ and looked at images of Goldsworthy’s earthworks,” explained Lang. “Then we went down to Ledbetter beach and worked together to create earthworks of our own. Before we cleaned up, we documented our works by taking photos. For a lot of the children it was their first hands-on experience with photography. Passersby also were interested in photographing the children’s work. Afterwards we discussed the process; the impact of the art on the environment and passersby; the impact of the environment on the art; and the importance of documentation. It was a great demonstration of the many aspects of creating art in public spaces.”

Denny’s group of Santa Barbara Charter School students also watched the Goldsworthy film. “The day we were scheduled to go to the beach it rained,” said Denny. “So we worked in the classroom, dividing up into three groups, and used blocks to create rivers running the length of

the room. These rivers would merge or intersect or run alongside one another. It was an interesting experiment in group dynamics, and a couple kids walked away from the project in frustration. It's pretty typical to view art as a highly individualistic process and this first attempt allowed us to explore the collaborative process and some of its difficulties. Later, when setting up our program's 'river' installation for the kids to create, I designed the project specifically to allow the individual and group to both be honored. The kids kept journals and wrote what they felt worked and what didn't."

Each group worked collaboratively to create a River for installation at the AFS Gallery, using discarded items the children collected from Santa Barbara's creeks and beaches. Also on display will be the children's journals, writings and photographs, documenting and interpreting their experiences.

The AFS gallery is open Tuesday through Saturday, from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm, and on Thursdays from 10:00 am until 6:00 pm. For more information on the show, please contact Holly Mackay at Art From Scrap at (805) 884-0459, ext 15, or devo@artfromscrap.org.

To find out more about Art From Scrap's Green Schools Environmental Education program go to www.artfromscrap.org or contact Tahara Ezrahti at (805) 884-0459 x12, or enviroed@artfromscrap.org

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