



PLEASE SAVE THE DATE:

Creación y Colaboración:
Celebrating 10 years of
SAFE PASSAGE from Maine
to Guatemala

AN EXHIBITION OF CHILDREN'S ART

Hosted by the Caldbeck Gallery
12 Elm Street, Rockland, Maine

May 8th and 9th, 2009

Gallery hours 11-5

Fiesta Celebración

Friday May 8th from 5-8 p.m.

*For more information about SAFE PASSAGE
please visit www.safepassage.org
The Caldbeck Gallery
telephone: 594-5935.
email: caldbeck@midcoast.com*

Creacion y Colaboracion - Celebrating 10 years of Safe Passage from Maine to Guatemala

& Celebration of The Safe Passage Notecard Project

Description of Exhibition

On May 8th, an exhibition showcasing the results of an international artistic collaboration will open at the Caldbeck Gallery in Rockland, Maine.

This exhibition aims to raise awareness and funds for Safe Passage, a Maine-based non-profit organization empowering at-risk children of families working in the Guatemala City garbage dump by creating opportunities and fostering dignity through the power of education.

In March of this year, Camden artist Antonia Munroe returned to Guatemala for the third time to lead an art workshop with children from the Safe Passage program in Guatemala City. Accompanying her as assistants were her children, Gordon and Fiona Fischer, and friend Mary Jane Young. Munroe led a related art residency with students at the Gladys Weymouth Elementary School in the farming community of Morrill, Maine, and later led a workshop with elementary students from the Children's House Montessori School in the seaside town of Camden, Maine.

This exhibition, curated by art historian Alexandra Ames Lawrence will feature work created by these three groups of school children, who hail from vastly different cultural backgrounds and environments, but all of whom will share the powerful experience of participating in a global collaborative art project. Artist-in-residence Munroe chose an in-depth exploration of Central and South American flora and fauna as the theme for the project for visual and aesthetic reasons as well as for its curricular merit. With each group using the same images for inspiration - birds, butterflies, flowers and exotic foliage - the children closely observed and interpreted the imagery in various ways, creating brilliant paintings which incorporate a wide variety of media and explore techniques in combination to varied effect. Experimenting with watercolor, oil pastels, acrylics, colored pencil, as well as elements of printmaking and textile design, the Guatemalan children created intense paintings on India paper and watercolor paper. The children in Morrill worked on panels creating collages mounted over richly painted backgrounds. A large mural painted by the Montessori students incorporates similar imagery, and is an inspired homage to the extraordinary 90 foot-long mural created by the children of Safe Passage in 2007. These children too will have created something lasting, a source of pride and joy for their own community.

Throughout residencies over a four-year period spent nurturing the creative spirit of the children of Safe Passage, Munroe conceived of this collaboration as a process through which children can engage in an exchange of ideas

and self-expression, finding commonalities and connections, thereby building the self-esteem vital to vibrant, healthy lives. Through the process of creating art and connecting to others through this experience, the beginning of a cross-cultural dialogue has been established between communities. The making and viewing of art becomes a powerful, universal language in its own right, one that transcends socio-economic, cultural and language barriers and is one that can transform lives and inspire the world.

The exhibition at the Caldbeck Gallery will serve several purposes. With their paintings displayed at one of Maine's finest galleries, young Maine artists and their communities will have the opportunity to see their own work hanging in a distinguished art gallery. For most children this is a rare opportunity, and rarer still is the opportunity to witness firsthand the power of artistic collaboration within their global community. Through the visual experience of seeing how a child from Guatemala approached the same exotic butterfly or flower that they studied themselves, using similar media but achieving perhaps very different results, the children from Maine will come away with a blossoming sense of self-esteem and pride in their unique creativity, while making a powerful connection to the world beyond their own communities.

Creating awareness in Midcoast Maine about the important work of Safe Passage, which is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year, the opening reception will serve primarily as a fundraiser to help sustain the programs of Safe Passage. Maine plays an important role in the community of Safe Passage, which was founded in 1999 by Hanley Denning who grew up in Yarmouth. During the past decade, Mainers of all ages have felt inspired to follow her visionary leadership and have traveled to Guatemala to volunteer in various capacities. We hope to raise funds for the Gladys Weymouth Elementary School to continue its collaborative art residencies (2nd grade teacher Sarah Nelson received a Service Learning Grant through MSAD #34. Support and funding was provided through KIDS Consortium, www.kidsconsortium.org), as support of the arts in Maine schools has become increasingly vital. We also hope to raise awareness about the programs of the Children's House Montessori School.

While the Guatemalan children will not be able to attend the exhibition, their spirit will be palpable as their stunning work hangs alongside the children's work from Maine. Through detailed follow-up using photographs and letters about the response to this collaborative show, they will learn about the event and about the work of these young Maine artists. We hope that this will be the beginning of an ongoing artistic collaboration between children from Guatemala and from Maine, all of whom are participants in the global community that is Safe Passage.

The Safe Passage Notecard Project - 3rd edition will be available for sale for the first time at the event on May 8th

The other primary reason for Munroe's recent residency at Camino Seguro was to create new artwork for The Safe Passage Notecard Project, which was launched in November 2007 by she and her daughter Fiona together

with Karen and Lanier Bolmer of Yarmouth, Maine. The notecard images are created from the artwork of the imaginative young Guatemalan artists Munroe has worked with over a period of four years. She believes strongly that their talent is inherent and ready to blossom at every given opportunity and has been working to help establish a permanent arts program as part of the Safe Passage curriculum.

The great interest in these children's artwork is being nurtured in ways that will benefit the organization. All proceeds from sales of the paintings and any reproductions will go towards the programs of Safe Passage. The Safe Passage Notecard Project has proven to be a very effective fundraising effort as it combines several important aspects of the organization's mission.

Curator of the exhibition
Alexandra Ames Lawrence

An independent art historian, Alexandra has worked with private collections and at museums including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Phillips Collection, Washington, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, where she contributed to exhibitions such as Van Gogh Face to Face, Impressionist Still Life and Gauguin Tahiti. Most recently the director of the Princely Collections at the Lobkowitz Palace Museum (Prague Castle, Czech Republic) that opened in 2007, Alexandra and her family have been based in Rockport since 2005. A member of the Board of Directors of the Children's House Montessori School in Camden and the Maine Humanities Council, she serves on the Collection Committee at the Portland Museum of Art and on the Fellows Council at the Harvard Art Museum.