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Blue Sky Returns

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Five artists who hail from Japan, the Czech Republic and the U.S. will call Dayton home for the next eight weeks as they work hand-in-hand with local young people in creating new works of contemporary art.

The Blue Sky Project kicks off with an artists’ reception from 7-9 p.m. Friday, June 18, at SquareOne Salon and Spa, 506 East Third St. downtown Dayton. The event is free and open to the public.

"The caliber of artists we attracted in the application process — their reputation, where they've exhibited — is truly exceptional," Blue Sky founder Peter Benkendorf said. "Having two international artists also adds a whole other dimension to the program and the type of artistic energy that will be brought to Dayton over the summer."

The Blue Sky Project is an eight-week residency program that hosts five artists who are committed to innovation and collaboration in contemporary art-making. Forty local teens work with the artists in small teams for 22 hours a week. In addition, each artist is assigned a local college student who works as a paid intern.

Blue Sky will be open to the public whenever it is in session 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday at the Rike Center Gallery on the University of Dayton campus.

A final exhibition will take place at the Armory, 201 East Sixth St. in the Oregon Arts District, Aug. 5-7. For a complete schedule of events, including an open studio and cookout on July 8 and "group of the week" public presentations, visit http://www.blueskydayton.org.

Blue Sky final projects have been exhibited at Priska Juschka Fine Art in New York City, featured in The New Yorker and exhibited and sold at ArtChicago. At least 12 Blue Sky youth alumni are now pursuing art degrees in college.

In May, two of the final works from last year's program were installed at the Dayton International Airport as part of the city's "Art at the Airport" program.

"The artists are inspired by what they find here, the art is co-created by teens who live here, and we want to keep the art in the community," Benkendorf said.

The Blue Sky Project — founded in 2004 in a Chicago suburb — made Dayton its permanent home last summer in partnership with the University of Dayton.

"Blue Sky fits perfectly with the University of Dayton's Marianist values of living and learning in community and reaching out to engage others," said Paul Benson, dean of the University's College of Arts and Sciences. The University has pledged financial support for the program, houses artists in the student neighborhood and offers the use of ArtStreet studios and other arts buildings.

The artists

Michael Casselli, Yellow Springs, Ohio, uses a hybrid of media to create his work, including video, robotics, and home grown technologies in his work; http://michaelcasselli.com (url: http://michaelcasselli.com).


John Peña, Pittsburgh, through his art is trying and failing to communicate with the natural world (such as one exhibit of letters
to the ocean returned as undeliverable). He is currently attempting to make artworks that blend into the fabric of daily life; http://www.johnpena.net

**Ari Tabei**, Tokyo and New York City, creates works made of garments and bags that are like cocoons or nests, offering both home and healing in an ever-changing world, utilizing a variety of materials — paper, fabric, plastic and vinyl — video and performance; http://www.aricoco.com

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