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Junior's work draws her to Art Institute

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By Amy Deis | STAFF WRITER

Walk into Regina Jiganti's room and you'll find graffiti, a real deer head with a body she painted and a vibrant green dragon on her stark white walls.

Even though this 16-year-old art enthusiast uses her walls as a canvas whenever she's bored, Jiganti's art experience includes having a drawing displayed at the Art Institute of Chicago's museum.

She is a junior at the Chicago Academy for the Arts where she's pursuing visual arts. One of the workshops included visiting the Art Institute for three days and sketching visitors admiring artwork.

"It was stressful because we had limited amount of time," Jiganti said, adding she also isn't fond of people staring over her shoulder. "We only had a couple of hours each day (to sketch)."

On Nov. 15, the roughly 30 students in the visual arts department unveiled their drawings in the Kraft Education Center in the basement, where they will be on display until Tuesday.

"It was on a free night, and people would randomly walk in," she said. "I'd say, 'I don't know you, but look.' "

The Art Institute staff reviewed all the drawings, asking the artists questions. Jiganti's drawing was of a sculpture near the American Gothic painting. She just sketched the outline of people, leaving their faces blank, but the detail in the rest of the sketch really stands out.

"Some people did two drawings a day, but I'm slower because I pay more attention to detail," she said.



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Jiganti has taken art lessons since second grade, starting with group lessons from Carolyn Catalano in Clarendon Hills.

"I basically learned everything from her," Jiganti said.

For her sophomore year of high school, she transferred from Hinsdale Central High School to the Chicago Academy for the Arts because Hinsdale didn't have the art community she likes.

She doesn't have a specialty yet, but wants to use other mediums in her artwork.

At school she's taking a sculpture class and working with owl pellets that her mother bought online from owlpellets.com. In class, Jiganti dissects them to remove the tiny animal bones, which she will piece together into a sculpture.

Using different mediums like animal bones from owl pellets is something Jiganti enjoys. She drew her inspiration from another artist who did something similar and from her fifth-grade outdoor education class when she learned about owl pellets.

She loves working with bones, and when a friend found a coyote skull, she couldn't resist using it.

"I get inspired randomly if a friend introduces me to something," she said.

In her room in Hinsdale, Jiganti has an art table, easel and drafting table, but she prefers painting on her floor, which is dotted with blotches of blue, yellow and green paint.

"I work on the ground because it's easier and more comfortable, although I probably shouldn't have," she said with a laugh.

Although she's only a junior, Jiganti is preparing for college by attending portfolio reviews, including one at the Art Institute and another in Milwaukee. From the feedback she received about her portfolio work, Jiganti learned she draws a lot of illustrations.

"(The reviews are) basically another way to see what they want for colleges," she said. "You get information and know what schools are looking for."

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