

## FOCUS

### THE MURAL MOVEMENT

Determined to uncover a medium that was non-toxic and environmentally friendly, I started looking into milk paint for a school project last January. Through my exploration, I found an article on Cindy House and her organization, The Mural Movement. House uses milk paint to create orphanage murals with children in developing countries. Moved by the work of The Mural Movement, I contacted

House to thank her for inspiring me as a young artist.

Before I knew it, House and I were corresponding regularly—and planning a trip! A month's worth of fundraising allowed me to gather what I needed to fly to Haiti with Cindy and a team of medical professionals to help create the Movement's next mural. The effects of this experience have changed how I approach art and where I hope to go as a community-based artist.

This past summer, family members invited me to accompany them on a visit to Morocco. I wondered what experiences we'd share, and then I remembered milk paint and The Mural Movement. A mural? I asked my family if I could offer the community my abilities as an artist to

create a mural with the children at the local orphanage. Soon I had their full support, the support of The Mural Movement, and a donation of powdered milk paint from The Canadian Old Fashioned Milk Paint Co! The Mural Movement's Moroccan Project was off the ground.

Early one morning, my family and I arrived at Khenifra's orphanage for young boys to find its occupants already excited about the work. We spoke in French, Arabic, and Berber as I explained the unique qualities of milk paint, and taught them how to mix the medium. Water is valuable in countries like Morocco, so milk paint for this particular project was very effective. Made with just a small amount of water, milk paint is mixable on site, and requires little cleanup. After showing the boys some pictures of the mural painted in Haiti, they generated ideas of their own. Each chose a favorite colour to mix, and we discussed the painting of self portraits. When we stopped for lunch, I asked everyone what else they'd like in their mural. Without hesitation they yelled, "Une piscine!"

The project was about so much more than creating a mural; it was about a friendship without borders. As an OCAD student in my final year, I'm reflecting on how my final body of work might tie together these recent experiences.

I've chosen to attend a Criticism and Curatorial Practice course entitled "Talking Communities" to help solidify my understanding of where community projects can be taken. My focus for this last year has shifted. Now I'm trying to discover more ways of sharing art, as opposed to just creating it individually.

#### ABOUT MILK PAINT

Milk paint, otherwise known as Casein paint, was invented by the Egyptians centuries ago, then later used by pioneers to North America. Its main ingredients are milk, hydrated lime powder, calcium carbonate and pigment. Milk paint is environmentally friendly and completely non-toxic when dry. It's easy to clean up, and as a powdered substance it only requires a little water to become fluid. To learn more about The Canadian Old Fashioned Milk Paint Co and Nitty Gritty Productions, visit <http://www.nittygritty.ca/milkpaint.html>. To contact Cindy House and The Mural Movement, email: [themuralmovement@yahoo.com](mailto:themuralmovement@yahoo.com). •

- Jenna Maclellan, 4th year Fine Arts Student



Photography: Jenna Maclellan

Pictured here are the author's sisters, Fatine and Imane.

