

Rio NGO Sends Young Artists to CalArt's CAP

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By Helen Trouten Torres, Contributing Reporter

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL – Several talented young musicians and artists from some of Rio's favelas have joined together with some of the city's more privileged young people for the opportunity to develop their talents and realize their potential in life. The innovative educational program, Community Arts Partnership (CAP), in its third year of running in Brazil offers the participants the chance to study at an intensive three-week course in July at one of most prestigious art schools in the U.S., CalArts, in Los Angeles, California.



The 2011 group sent to Los Angeles for the Cal Arts CAP program, photo provided by Anna

The rationale for combining students from different nations as well as different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, is to enable them to learn from each other. From both a perspective of opportunities away from poverty and crime, as well as the inspirations of life and arts, they are able to share experiences.

Wainer Guimaraes and his wife Magui, parents of a CalArts graduate, set up the Brazil CAP program after leaving the U.S. to return to Brazil in 2007 to do social work. They created the Arts and Transformation program in partnership with The British School and Anna Whyte of Innova Group. The trio has led the program ever since.

Students have come from various organizations in communities of Rio to participate in the CalArts CAP program, including: Complexo da Maré (Projeto Uere, Vila Olímpica), Bola Pra Frente, Comunidade Jesus Vive, Barra Mansa (Orquestra de Barra Mansa), ONG Orquestrando a Vida – Campos dos Goytacazes, Policia Militar Rio de Janeiro music company.

CalArts was founded by Walt Disney in the 1960s to establish an educational facility to 'cross-fertilize' creativity within the arts including: dance, music, visual arts, drama, film, photography, creative writing and animation. The international CAP Program began twenty years ago as a channel to reach out to the less fortunate inner-city youth in California and eight years ago, CalArts established an arts workshop in war-torn Uganda.



Plaque of Gratitude featuring previous participants, photo by Wainer Guimaraes.

One of the young artists participating in the group from a favela in Rio, was traumatized after seeing a neighbor shot dead in front of him by local criminals. He told Wainer Guimaraes that Arts and Transformation gave him a sense of hope and a chance to see another side of life.

Guimaraes describes: "These young artists can reveal to the world in amazing artistic ways the harsh realities of life in the favelas whilst also showing the courage, perseverance, endurance, ingenuity, and brilliance of talents that could have gone by the way side without this opportunity."

Guimaraes is certain that Brazil has more Villa Lobos, Jobims and Portinari's waiting to be found, and that the program offers a platform where individual talents can be sharpened in the hands of amazing teachers.

Even if art does not end up being their chosen career, the benefit of such an experience on their outlook and prospects in life is unquestionable explains Guimaraes. "I will continue to do all I can to see that the CAP Program is replicated in Rio and all over Brazil." Confirmed plans include establishing a CAP workshop in three cities within the state of Rio in the coming year.

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