



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 4, 2025

**CONTACT:** Lauren Creiman, (909) 833-9853

## **Bonita Unified Students Celebrate Black History Month with BCA Art Exhibit**

**SAN DIMAS/LA VERNE** – Energized by the pioneering legacy of Black and African American artists, San Dimas High School art students have created work in a diverse range of styles, themes, media, and cultural influences, assembling them for the exhibit, “Inspired by Black: Student Reflections on African American Artistry,” currently on display at the Bonita Center for the Arts (BCA).

Curated by San Dimas High visual and performing arts chair and art teacher Dominic Black, the exhibit features drawings, paintings, sculptures, and mixed media pieces from dozens of art students, who engage and reflect on the work of Black or African American historic and contemporary artists.

“All the student artists selected a Black artist whose work spoke to them, and each created an original piece which reflects on the artist’s style, technique, or subject matter,” Black said. “I am proud of their efforts and the integrity they showed in researching and honoring another artist. The students’ work represents all levels of the San Dimas art program, and the show is incredible.”

“Inspired by Black” addresses a critical issue in the art world: the historic exclusion of many talented artists from mainstream art history. Seeking to impress upon his students the historical inequities, Black compiled a database of more than 140 Black or African American artists, both living and dead, and asked his students to select one artist to study and then reimagine their work and legacy in an original piece of their own.

The inclusion of contemporary artists made an impact on San Dimas High students, who were able to access and follow the artists’ Instagram accounts and find work that resonated with them. San Dimas sophomore Addy Andersen selected contemporary artist Wesley Clark as her inspiration. Clark uses mixed media and found objects to address the complexities of African American experiences.

“Wesley Clark not only makes visual art, he also makes historical references and social commentary on issues that can’t be described in words, issues that go beyond a canvas, exposing truths about race, power, and systemic oppression in America,” Andersen said. “After researching Clark, I gained a respect for him and his activism and techniques. Every word in my original piece was inspired by his works.”

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# BONITA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

## NEWS RELEASE

At an artist reception held at the BCA on Feb. 20, Bonita Unified math teacher on special assignment Deb Brownlee stood admiring a tempera on charcoal piece by San Dimas senior Vivian Vasquez titled “Pink Lemonade,” a work inspired by contemporary mixed media artist Delita Martin. “Pink Lemonade” depicts a profile of a Black woman against a gold backdrop, with red circles appearing in both the foreground and background.

“I really love this painting,” Brownlee said. “The essence of the woman in the picture and the vivid colors and imagery. It’s brilliant. You don’t see this type of work every day.”

The art exhibit showcased a wide range of creative choices made by San Dimas art students, from a Theaster Gates-inspired mixed media dwelling made primarily from wooden sticks created by San Dimas senior Jade Xia; to a Simone Yvette Leigh-inspired sculpture from San Dimas senior Sami Hamad made from used clay, acrylic paint, jute twine and dried fruit.

Art history and the work of underrepresented artists is a primary focus for Black – who teaches Art 1, Art 2 and Advanced Placement Studio Art. During the 2024-25 school year, students have celebrated Latino art and culture by constructing traditional ofrendas for Day of the Dead celebrations, and honored women surrealists by creating work in the surrealist style.

“Inspired by Black: Student Reflections on African American Artistry” will be on display at the BCA throughout the rest of the school year. To schedule an appointment, contact the BCA at (909) 971-8280. The BCA is located at 822 W. Covina Blvd. in San Dimas.

### PHOTOS:

**BUSD\_ARTSHOW1:** San Dimas High School senior Elijah Gomez was inspired by the work of cartoonist George Herriman – who created the pioneering comic strip “Krazy Kat” – for his animated drawing “Old Meets New,” as part of the school’s “Inspired by Black: Student Reflections on African American Artistry,” on display at the Bonita Center for the Arts. The exhibit features drawings, paintings, sculptures, and mixed media pieces from dozens of San Dimas art students, who engage and reflect on the work of Black or African American historic and contemporary artists.

**BUSD\_ARTSHOW2:** San Dimas High School freshman Niki Mattson showcases her painting inspired by contemporary artist Jas Knight during the “Inspired by Black: Student Reflections on African American Artistry” exhibit currently showing at the Bonita Center for the Arts.

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