

Mobile Residency Project

At the end of October performer and visual artist Kevin Reese spent a week working with a sixth grade class at Pelham Elementary. The Fine Arts Center's Arts and Education Programs for Schools invited Mr. Reese to conduct his Mobile Residency Project and to perform as part of the school series. The students that participated in the residency had the opportunity to design and build a permanent kinetic sculpture that was installed on the school grounds.

Prior to the residency, Mr. Reese met with Principal Rena Moore and sixth grade teacher Cathy Neale to discuss placement and size of the mobile. In early September Ms. Neale's students created drawings to send to Reese. Taking inspiration from these drawings he created a model for a 16' kinetic sculpture which the students would then build and install during the week-long residency.

This project created a true partnership between the Fine Arts Center and Pelham Elementary. The school complemented Reese's work by incorporating appropriate curricular activities into the classroom instruction which began long before his arrival. Links to the sciences were stressed through a unit on Forces and Structures. In addition, students spent time studying various artists and visited the Rockwell Museum.

Students were instructed to create abstract drawings for Mr. Reese, focusing on themes they would like to have represented in the sculpture. They would then need to consider how those ideas could be realized in an architecturally sound structure. On the first day of the residency Mr. Reese brought in his scale model of the piece. Reflected in the sculpture were the recurring themes and subjects of the students' drawings, such as a sense of community. You can see evidence of this in the figures of dancers on the top of the sculpture and an abstract form meant to signify a hand that was central to one student's drawing.

Working in groups of 5, the twenty students were able to participate in every phase of the project. Throughout the week, students were called upon to use their knowledge of mathematics and physics as they created their artwork. The students helped to measure, cut, sand, and assemble the mobile.

On the final day, Kevin performed his one-man piece entitled *A Perfect Balance* to over three hundred students from across the Pioneer Valley. The performance is an exciting multi-media adventure inspired by the work of American Artist Alexander Calder (the inventor of the mobile). Following the performance he returned to Pelham Elementary for the final assembly and unveiling of the sculpture.

If you find yourself in Pelham please visit the school. The piece has been placed in a publicly accessible area between the library and elementary school.