

# Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art

## **MATRIX 163 + Hartford Boys & Girls Club of Asylum Hill**

### *Program Summary*

The Artist Residency program at the Wadsworth Atheneum is part of the Community Engagement Initiative, a large-scale outreach program currently in its third year. Artists engaged in the Artist Residency program work closely with Hartford community groups to plan, develop, and execute a collaborative project. Through this program, participants learn about the artist process while celebrating the things that make Hartford unique.

As part of the MATRIX 163/Boys & Girls Club of Asylum Hill residency, artist Claire Beckett led an introductory tour of her work in the Wadsworth's MATRIX gallery. After asking questions and closely examining her works, the teens met once a week at the Boys & Girls Club of Asylum Hill to create their own photo portraits inspired by Beckett's work. Teaching artists Rita Lombardi and Lawrence Roy guided the group in techniques such as focusing, cropping, close-ups, and establishing mood in their work. Participants took turns posing and shooting with professional digital cameras.



Lombardi and Roy encouraged participants to step outside of their comfort levels to create

engaging photos; throughout each session, they asked participants to move closer to their subjects, take extreme close-ups of body parts such as feet and hands, take risks through cropping, and try to create composite photographs. At the beginning of each session, the instructors and participants examined photo proofs and reflected on the success of each shot.



The final images for the show were determined by a vote among participants and titled by the creator of each. Lombardi

and Roy led the final selection discussion, enabling the Image Makers group to self-curate their show. Although some individual photographers have more photographs in the show than others, each work is in many ways a collaborative effort—creative ideas were shared freely, and each participant contributed in some way to the posing, composition, and selection of each work.

The final prints, frames, and labels were prepared by the Wadsworth Atheneum, ready for a reception on January 14, 2012. Families of participants and staff members from the Boys & Girls Club were invited to attend a private breakfast in the exhibition. By the time the reception was held, participants had already visited the Wadsworth twice—once to tour the MATRIX gallery with Claire Beckett and once to explore photographs in the permanent collection. By the reception, participants began to feel a sense of ownership and belonging at the Wadsworth. As one participant stated upon her arrival, “Look, it’s our museum!”



Claire Lombardi, Lawrence Roy, and Claire Beckett were all in attendance to offer final critiques of each artwork in informal, one-on-one conversations with the participants. After the reception, the show was opened to the public during one of the Wadsworth’s monthly Second Saturdays for Families program, an event that draws a big local audience. The show remained on view throughout the weekend, including Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Day and the following few weeks. The show was seen and enjoyed by many visitors throughout its run.



The Boys & Girls Club of Asylum Hill arranged for some of the photographs to be submitted to the national Image Makers competition, a photography contest for Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide.