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AVPA Artists: A Lesson in Japanese Internment



By Isabella Haro

20 AVPA artists took a field trip to Boyle Heights to witness a reading of the play for their current art project based on, *Question 27, Question 28* by Chay Yew, as part of the Center Theatre Group program. After reading the script, each AVPA Art student was asked

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to bring in “offensive papers” to repurpose by shredding it to make paper. Working with CTG in a 10-week artist-in-residency with Janne Larsen, they worked in pairs to create paper sculptures of reflection, beauty, and poignancy.

The play compiles recollections of Americans who experienced Executive Order 9066, interning all Japanese Americans on the West coast of the country during World War II. The recollections are from real accounts several years before, during, and immediately after the order took effect. These accounts are often extremely sad, invoking an extreme shame in the government that corralled innocent American citizens for years and did little to rectify their actions later. The play does so in a format of very short vignettes being read by four actors for the entirety of its duration.

After eating bean and cheese burritos at Al & Bea’s, a local favorite since 1966—the reading itself took place at Benjamin Franklin Library in Boyle Heights, just one of the several play readings that Center Theatre Group performs during the month. It was a free public showing including a community audience who expressed their interest in the topic by sharing their feelings in a post-reading discussion. Many of the comments were focused on the lack of knowledge any given person would have prior to experiencing the play, despite being so close to where it happened. Freshman Prema Reyes commented, “I never knew anything about the internment before this, even though I have lived in California my whole life.” Her comments are a testament to the relevance of the play still is to this day, as many citizens of the United States still live their lives ignorant to the horrors of history, doomed to repeat it.

1. AVPA Art Students in CTG’s Front and Center program.
- 2) 4 Center Theatre Group actors
- 3) Prema and Sophie making paper for their paper sculpture.



4) CTG Artist-In-Residency, Janne Larsen

5) Maya and Elisa working together to connect their paper sculpture.

6) Lynn and Go working to create their paper sculpture.

7) R-L: Ruby, Eva, and Prema making paper sculpture

8) Lacy and Amelia during the final critique.

















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