

# JRB ART AT THE ELMS

Paseo Arts District

## Arts and Education

By Joy Reed Belt

January 21, 2021



Close up of Holly Wilson's "Seven Sides of the Self," Crayola Crayons on Birch Panel,  
60 x 48 x 3 in.,

If there is anyone out there who doubts the value of the arts in Education, they only had to experience Amanda Gorman, the youngest inaugural poet in U.S. history, read her poem "The Hill We Climb," at the Inauguration of Joe Biden. Amanda walked to the podium dressed in bright yellow jacket with a red headband, the embodiment of purpose, energy, and creativity. When she began speaking, we learned how a creative, brilliant, and well-educated mind thinks and how it communicates. Amanda instantly became a media darling. One headline announced, "She stole the show." She did

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indeed steal the show. Much has been written about her receiving a scholarship from Harvard after being raised by a single mother, a middle school teacher, in California. But I think the fact that has impressed me the most is that she learned how to use words because of a speech impediment, "When you have to teach yourself how to say sounds, when you have to be highly concerned about pronunciation. It gives you a certain awareness of sonics and the auditory experience." You can find out more about this remarkable young woman, who is determined to someday run for the President of the United States, online or in almost any major publication. The full text of her poem is reprinted in today's "Oklahoman."



Skip Hill, "Jadim do Amor (There Will Be No Love Dying Here, No. 1), Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 36 x 24 in.

Skip Hill, "Jadim do Amor (There Will Be No Love Dying Here, No. 2), Acrylic and Mixed Media on Canvas, 36 x 24 in.

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While not every young person can become a Poet Laureate, we can lift up every child by making sure they have access to a good education. I am convinced that the arts must be a strong component in that educational process if it is to be successful. Thankfully, there are people who have been working hard to bring that about long before I became involved in education. In 2002 the Kirkpatrick Foundation funded an investigative team through the Davinci Institute to explore a national initiative, A+ Schools. The team visited sites across the United States and became convinced that it was a program Oklahoma needed. They then advocated for its acceptance in Oklahoma. Working with the University of Central Oklahoma they created the A+ Schools Institute. The mission of that organization is to work with schoolteachers and administrators to make learning more intuitive and fun via the arts. Their operating principle is: "By integrating other academics with the arts, we create an environment where every student can thrive." Harding Fine Arts Academy became the first A+ High School in Oklahoma. Thanks to Jean Hendrickson, the current Harding Academy Board President, as well as several other good, competent, and dedicated professionals there are now 70 such schools throughout the state. The students who benefit from this method of instruction, which recognizes that there are many different ways to learn and that it is part of an educator's responsibility to explore those methods, are giving our young people the wings, they need to become all that they can become. When young people develop wings, they evolve in wonderful ways. They become thoughtful, creative, and purposeful just like the young woman, Amanda Gorman, we experienced yesterday.

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[Amanda Gorman](#)