

**W**hile most high school students spend hours gossiping on the phone, logging significant stints in front of the television; or getting into a little trouble, a few lucky souls have been saved from this cultural desert thanks to a Back Bay institution and a student run exhibit called Youth Fusion.

Founded by David and Aurelie Edwards, The Cloud Foundation, based in Copley Square, has been supporting the arts community and helping at-risk youth in the Back Bay since 2000. Its three story facility has previously been used by local youth groups for rehearsals, fundraisers, and performances in addition to providing grants for youth art projects. This year they are shaking things up with their first foray into their own programming, a visual art and film festival exhibit which opened February 11.

"From the idea and the format, to the design of the invitation, the selection of

making videos about people whose voices we don't often hear in the media, and I find this both admirable and hopeful for our future."

The students are not only getting an education about film production, they are learning about life. "I've learned that [curating is] really difficult because not everybody is going to agree with you on the same things," says Savannah Peterson, a student at the ICA. "Everybody has different visions of what is happening in a certain film and different perceptions of what something is about."

Ecclesiastre, a member of the Community Arts Center, elaborated on what is important in a film. "I think the topic is up there, but I look for the shots. And I look that the person really took time to do what he wanted to do, and he really did get the message across, no matter what the topic was. As long as I get that message and it's not hidden and we have to go hunting for it. Because I don't think certain people will get it as clearly, and that's why a clear cut point is what I look for."

Katsiane continues, "I hope that the Back Bay community will come out and

# film makers in the making

The Cloud Foundation's Youth Fusion exhibit offers art and hope

the work, and the hanging of the work, everything—it's all done by teens," says Stella McGregor, the Executive Director of the Cloud Foundation. "We treat the work with the same respect and care as if they are artists in training. It's a great opportunity because it validates their work. The more care that you put into the way you exhibit the work, and if you do it in a professional way, the more [the teens are] going to learn about what it takes to really function in real life. Those skills are transferable to any other kind of job that they would like to do."

The exhibit features works by teens from area high schools and six film students, heralding from film programs around Boston, who have stepped into the role of professional curators to put the film festival festival together. Oliver Anderson and Jessica Blaise from the Fast Forward Film Program at the Institute of Contemporary Art here in the Back Bay, Ryan Stewart and Dominique Bonner from the Community Art Center in Cambridge, and Matt Ecclesiastre and Savannah Peterson from Real 2 Reel program at Raw Art Works in Lynn have been selected by school administrators to participate in the event.

"What I see in all six of the curators is an enthusiasm for not only other youth art creation, but for the world around them," says Coordinator Jared Katsiane, who oversees the curators. "They are all passionately engaged in their schools, the videos they create, and social justice. I see this theme in much of their work,

participate in all the wonderful programs that Cloud has to offer. Just by becoming regular audience members, meeting the youth artists and their neighbors, they will be doing a lot to break down barriers between youth and adults, while enjoying some great art in their backyard."

In addition to film, Youth Fusion will showcase teen work from The Boston Arts Academy, which will present miniature sculptures called "Witness and Legacy," Addison Gallery of American Art has sponsored Lawrence High School's photography exhibit called "No Place Like Home," and H.U.M.A.N. will show "On the Stand," a mixed media exhibit made by girls in the juvenile justice system.

Running from February 11 to May 14, Youth Fusion will have a rotating assortment of visual arts exhibits, with the first group lasting until the end of March.

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Films will be presented on March 12, April 9, and May 14 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The exhibits will be open from 10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Mondays through Thursdays and 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays. Call 617-262-2949 or visit [www.cloudfoundation.org](http://www.cloudfoundation.org) for more information or to schedule another time to view the exhibit. The Cloud Foundation is located at 647 Boylston Street.

