

Not Your Average Josh

Artist Creates Unique Community Mosaic at Cohen Hillel Academy

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Associate Editor

Josh Winer isn't your average studio artist. "A lot of artists have their vision and they want to develop it in the studio alone. That's not my way of working," he said. He prefers the experience of sharing his art with others.

He often invites locals to make their own contributions to his artwork – allowing community-members to conceptualize, create and then place their own vision onto his design – something few artists do. But Winer's been doing just that over the past few weeks at Cohen Hillel Academy (CHA) in Marblehead.

The unique work of laying tile with members of the community connects the art to students and families in a more meaningful way because of the sense of pride and ownership they'll feel in the work when looking at the finished product.

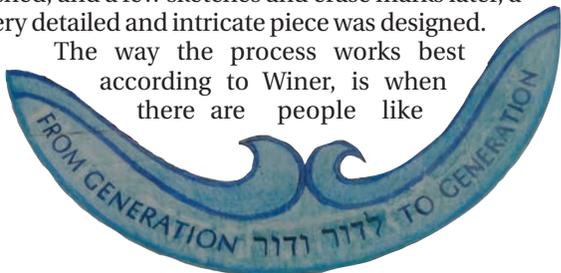
Winer, an internationally acclaimed artist, architect and public space mosaicist, has been commissioned to design a very large mosaic that will be affixed to the outside of the CHA building.

Winer's preference of working with others in his artistic process is, perhaps, the reason why he is just the right artist for a unique community project in memory of Ralph Kaplan at CHA. "When Ralph passed away we really wanted to think of something to honor his legacy," said Head of School Amy Gold.

Kaplan was a longtime supporter of CHA and longstanding board of trustees member. His children graduated from CHA and his great-grandson is currently enrolled in its kindergarten program. According to Gold, there was an outpouring of donations from the community, including the Kaplan family, that directed those funds to the school in Kaplan's memory. "We wanted to do something to really honor his memory for his commitment to the school and to the Jewish community of the North Shore," said Gold.

After multiple meetings with Winer, Gold, members of the Kaplan family and Director of Community Engagement Diane Knopf, the meaning they wanted the artwork to portray was established; and a few sketches and erase marks later, a very detailed and intricate piece was designed.

The way the process works best according to Winer, is when there are people like



Josh Winer starting to lay tile for the Mosaic that will be hung outside of Cohen Hillel Academy in memory of Ralph Kaplan.

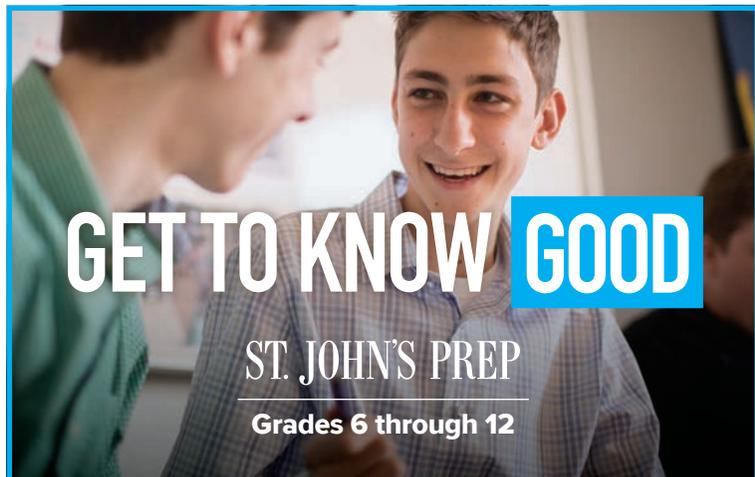
Gold, Knopf and the Kaplans acting as visionaries, inspiring and guiding the project, and Winer designing that vision.

"I haven't seen or done one like this before," said Winer of the piece. Though he has done medallion pieces and appreciates the circle signifying endless continuity, it is unique because the design itself is filled with symbolism.

Without giving too much away, one symbolic design that has been integrated into the piece is blue ocean waves. This signifies the connection with the school's geographic location, but also the continuous flow, like the ocean's currents, of Jewish education and Jewish traditions. "The legacy factor of adults teaching children is kind of like the way water is the source of all life. You can use it as a metaphor," explained Winer.

The most difficult part, according to Winer, is the installation of the mosaic. "That's truly the only part that can go disastrously wrong," said Winer. It is most common for artists to hire outside help to do the installation, but Winer does it himself. "It's very fussy work so you have to be very careful about it," he added. If not executed properly, the entire piece can come crashing down, leaving the artwork completely destroyed.

The mosaic will be built in a classroom in CHA over the next few weeks, with the help of community members who have been invited to help lay tile and glass with Winer, before being hung on the wall outside of the building. The installation ceremony is set for October 23.



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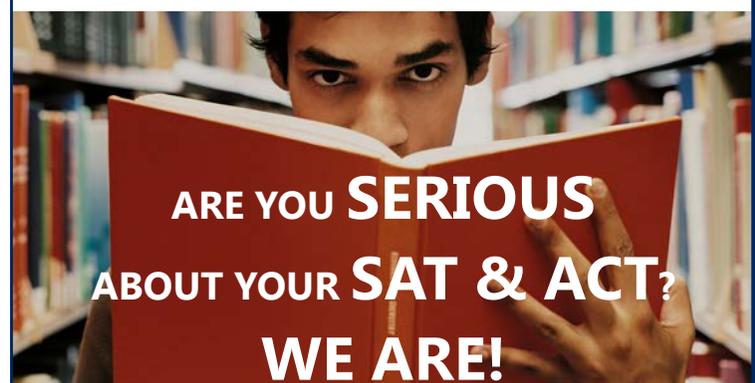
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