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Social Media Goes Analog at Youth Gallery Show

by Chris Schodt

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Meredith Leich (right) taught the group with Nina Rodriguez. Behind them is the "message wall".

Social media has grown to become a huge presence in many people's lives, but what is it like for kids who grew up with Facebook, and have never known a world without it?

Southern Exposure's Youth Advisory Board (YAB) opened their new art show last Thursday at the SOEX gallery on 20th Street. Called "The Z-Narrative," the show, created by high school artists, grew out of a series of collaborative comics the group made.

"We took the idea of the z-axis from math, that it's a different direction, and we wanted to look at unconventional ways people tell stories," said Nina Rodriguez, who co-led the group with fellow artist Meredith Leich.



Marcus, one of the student participants, shows off some of his art. He said that before this he didn't really consider himself an artist, despite having a folder of drawings with him at the opening.

gallery takes the form of a real-world social network, encouraging audience participation. You can sign in on a wall, read the “private” messages in semi-transparent envelopes on the “message wall” (and write your own), add an item to the scrolling “news feed,” or take a selfie that will feature on the event’s Instagram page ([#soexselfie](#)).

The show also features a listening station where you can hear the students discussing the influence of smartphones and social media in their lives. Among anecdotes about how smartphones and the internet shape social life at school, several students mentioned moments of connection with parents or other family members derailed by digital devices.

Midway through explaining this, Leich paused and leaned down to squint at a paper card someone had attached to the “news feed.” “Oh gosh, Nelson Mandela died?” she said.

The gallery’s hours are Tuesday to Saturday, 12 p.m.-6:00 p.m., and the show runs through December 14.

The YAB is a free art program. The next session starts on January 28, and interested students should contact Artists in Education Program Director Dave Sandoval at aie@soex.org.