

ArtScene

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“Children with autism and other special needs are repeatedly plagued by stigma and discrimination. They are frequently subject to humiliation and bullying. But not only are they treated poorly, so are family members, causing isolation and emotional distress. Hence, “inside/out” is a beautiful collaborative art project by art therapist and photographer Pat Sandler, who builds for us a bridge of insight to the otherness. The project consists of portraits, texts and photographs of 20 young artists with special needs from The Help Group’s Village Glen School. Each student is displayed in a black and white portrait shot by Sandler. Beside these are displayed the photographs and insightful personal writings of the students. These provide a window to their souls to which we can connect. For example, a photo of Gerardo, resting on his bed with his eyes closed, tells us that although he looks like a typical boy from the outside, he is different due to his autism. His condition has robbed him of a carefree childhood, making him grow up faster, so that he calls himself a man-child seeking happiness. An image of Ebony, an African-American teenage girl, depicts her palms pointing at us, covering part of her face. She writes, “When I look at this picture, I see beautiful hands hiding an emptiness underneath a tender face. Yet she smiles when the world turn away. Who is she? Who does she wish to be? Anything but nobody.” (dnj Gallery, Santa Monica)”

-Simone Kussatz