

create-ive solution

By Jen Michael-Sikora

Photos by Jacqueline Southby for Edgewater Design Group

“I always wanted to have a studio for kids,” Sara Manchester said as she described her background in art therapy and fine arts.

When Lester’s BBQ, formerly Boyne City’s train depot, was for sale, it was an inconvenient time for Manchester to think about renovating the old restaurant. She was just finishing her master’s in art therapy with a bachelor’s degree in fine arts.

Her husband, Tim, a Realtor, kept his eye on the property knowing it matched Sara’s vision to have an art studio for kids and the community. Since they loved the property’s history and the transportation theme, they moved forward with the purchase and renovation and CREATE Community Art Studio opened in the fall of 2016.

In the front of the studio sits a train car formerly attached from the 1970’s. Manchester decided to remove the connection to make it appear like an actual train coming into the station. In the future she sees the car as a gallery space showcasing students’ artwork, creative writing and poetry.

Upon entering the art studio, her white-washed pine walls are the blank canvas to pops of color throughout the entire building.

“The idea was to keep the historical pieces as much as we can, in fact everyone asks me if the floor is original which makes me happy because it’s not,” said Manchester.

Because of the unstable floor conditions,



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they leveled the building with concrete and used reclaimed hit-skip pine from an old warehouse in Ohio.

A unique cubby space was designed “to capture all of the kiddos’ belongings, a security place for them and an ease of entry for parents to grab and go,” Manchester explained of the reception area.

Her office also serves as her children’s art therapy practice, Healing Paint Brush. An art piece of swirly blue circles sits on her custom built desk by local builder W.B. Builders, Inc.

“Being a community studio, it was really important we use local talent,” Manchester said.

Once students grab their nametags, they funnel through one of the four acrylic sliding doors representing color and containment. Here the hungry kindergartners through fifth-grade students are served snacks near the lime green countertops that match the CREATE logo.

After snacking, they enter the cozy lounge area filled with comfy cube seats. Manchester worked with Jana Phillips of Interiors Inc., for all of the interior furnishings.



The main workspace is modern, minimalist and easy to clean.

BEFORE



Left: The space was formerly Lester’s BBQ. Right: The floor needed to be leveled with concrete and a reclaimed hit-skip pine was added.

BEFORE



Further down the hall is the Art Studio. The floor appears slab in nature, but is a ceramic tile. The cabinets and countertops are like those found in chemistry labs, which help with cleanups.

Up above are industrial lights and beams with a second story overlooking the studio for graduate students (middle school students) and future students seeking the Artists in Residence Program.

One of the most noticeable design elements is the garage door at the end of the studio that replaced a wall of windows, but was chosen for simplicity, light, ventilation and for the public to see from the outside.

It was important for Manchester to make sure her architect could see the vision and think creatively. She knew

architect Michael Karr of Edgewater Design Group was the right fit for the project once he explained he grew up a mile away from Raw Art Works, a studio for kids.

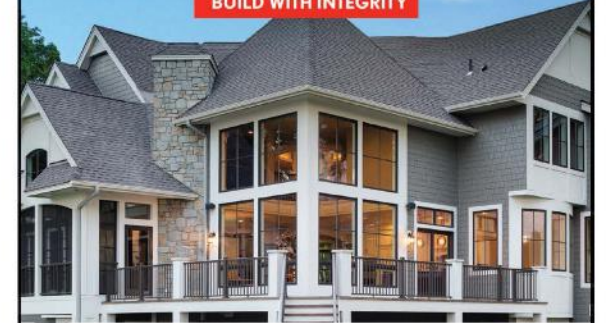
CREATE is only the beginning for Manchester. She plans to continue to grow CREATE to capture her vision of supporting artists all over the community.

“We’re busy,” Manchester explained and pointed to the upstairs component that houses her newest vision of the Artists in Residence Program. A grant was recently received to offer the program this fall to local high school students.

For more information, contact Manchester at (231) 459-4066 or www.letscreatetogether.org.

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