

8.5. Youth Visual Storytelling Program 2020/2021 Pilot Program Report

AUTHOR: Lisa Woolfe, Arts and Culture Officer

ENDORSED BY: Rebecca Aukim, Acting Director Community and Library Services

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Youth Visual Storytelling Project Council Report Attachment 1 of 1 [8.5.1 - 12 pages]

PURPOSE:

To report the outcomes of the 2020/2021 Youth Visual Storytelling Program Pilot.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

In 2020/2021, in line with the vision and directions set out in the North Sydney Arts & Cultural Strategic Plan 2019-2022, the Arts & Culture team identified an opportunity to strengthen Council's existing youth-based arts and cultural program to meet the changing needs of young people in the North Sydney LGA. In 2020/2021 the arts team piloted a revised and innovative 'in school artist in residence program' where Council partnered visiting artists and arts workers with local public high schools to mentor young people to create visual narrative from concept through to presentation.

Local schools Bradfield Senior College and Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College participated in the pilot program, enthusiastically endorsing the outcomes and benefits to the young people of the LGA.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The cost of the program was \$10,490 (excl. GST). In previous years, Council funds and resources were allocated towards marketing and advertising to recruit young people to the extra-curricular program, as well as towards venue hire and other administrative tasks such as enrolments and parental permissions. The piloted in-school program utilised school resources for recruitment, venue and administrative tasks, ensuring that Council funds and resources are used more effectively to achieve the program objectives.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** the report be received.

LINK TO COMMUNITY STRATEGIC PLAN

The relationship with the Community Strategic Plan is as follows:

4. Our Social Vitality

4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe

BACKGROUND

The Arts & Culture team's long running Youth Visual Storytelling Program (YVSP) aims to facilitate meaningful arts and cultural encounters that supports young people's wellbeing while sustaining and deepening their involvement in arts and culture.

In recent years the YVSP has operated as an extra-curricular program. This was offered once per year to young people between 12-18 years as a 6 week program with creative industry mentors who worked with photography and screen based technologies. Students were guided from concept development to final production and presentation of their visual narrative. Acknowledging the rapidly expanded means of artistic expression now available as well as the evolving challenges and needs of young people today, the Arts & Culture team identified an opportunity to re-present the YVSP as an innovative program that would

- Position Council as a leader in facilitating innovative and meaningful arts and cultural encounters for young people in the LGA that supports their wellbeing, sustaining and deepening their involvement in arts and culture.
- Strengthen our arts and cultural sector by enabling a diverse community of artists and arts workers with employment and meaningful opportunities for professional development.
- Facilitate strategic, collaborative and sustainable partnerships between Council, educators, artists and local business.
- Nurture the creative skills of young people who are interested in a career in the arts.
- Support professional development of high school teachers.

CONSULTATION REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement is not required.

DETAIL

In 2020/2021 the Arts & Culture team developed guidelines for a pilot 'In school artist in residence program', where Council would match a visual artist/s and visiting curator to work with students in the school environment to develop a creative narrative. The YVSP guidelines were developed based on significant research of similar programs run internationally and interstate (after finding no similar programs are run within New South Wales) together with discussions with high school teachers and feedback from young people who have previously participated in the program. The findings indicated that

- Young people are less interested in structured 'how to' style teacher led programs during their down time.

- Young people are less interested in structured programs about screen based technology or any other technology – they can find what they need or want to know independently.
- Young people are more interested in and respond well to deeper creative experience and want to push their creative outcomes.
- A program based around technology/theme/interest that works today will be outdated in 6 months.
- Creative programs for young people must be agile so that the offering and outcomes evolve to meet rapidly changing needs.
- Creative programs that aim to provide young people outlets for self-expression must be ‘youth led’ and open ended, not ‘adult led’. This approach enables young people to make meaningful connections and interpretations based on their own experiences.
- The best way to recruit young people is taking programs to young people rather than recruiting them to come to us.

The guidelines and an invitation to participate in the pilot program was distributed to schools across the LGA. Bradfield Senior College and Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College responded enthusiastically. Local Visual artists **Alex Thorby**, **Tamsin Salehian** and artist/curator **Paul McDonald** were carefully selected and matched with schools based on each schools’ capacity and needs. The artists worked with students over a 6 week period during school hours.

Bradfield Senior College

Bradfield Senior College conducts an innovative program and timetable for students in year 11 and 12 from diverse backgrounds and locations across the metropolitan area, some of whom come from challenging backgrounds.

A group of Year 11 students presented ‘Cultural Evolutionists (Evolution of Sydney)’ as part of Bradfield Senior College’s wider curriculum event ‘ReGeneration’. Visual artist Tamsin Salehian acting as mentor, sounding board and problem solver worked with the students to present their own ambitious and highly developed concept. The resulting artwork is a large scale installation giving visitors the experience of a walk through a corridor reflecting Australia’s timeline and the possible ways our culture could evolve in the future. Original artworks, primary source material (such as the Referendum), photos and text layer across fabric walls like a collage, overlaid with graffiti, ripped posters, and other remnants. The end of the installation offers a choice that explores the individual’s and collective’s influence on a nation. Council contributed funds for specialist fabric printing and other specialty materials that enhanced the resulting display.

Bradfield Senior College Learning Coordinator Kim-Louise Kofod gave the program high praise stating that student attendance was 100% across the 6 weeks, students received valuable guidance and produced work of very a high standard.

The resulting work was presented to the school community, including parents and friends, at Bradfield Senior College’s annual Vivid Ideas presentation over 2 days in May 2021.

Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College

Visual artist Alex Thorby and artist/curator Paul McDonald worked with Monte Sant Angelo students from across years 7-11 as part of the school’s existing and long running enrichment program ‘Art After Hours’. Council, the artists and Monte’s Head of Visual Arts, Kate Watson

worked together to develop a project theme that would suit the school's capacity while giving students creative and expressive freedom. Students worked on individual conceptual sculptural self-portrait projects. Acting as facilitator, Alex guided students through the process of developing their idea into a finished artwork. Paul McDonald helped students write about their work and present their work in a gallery setting as a cohesive story.

Students were given the opportunity to work with materials they would not normally have access to and given agency over their creative output. Many students created artworks that addressed concerns about their place in society and challenges faced by young people in general. The resulting works were presented in an exhibition titled 'Self Expression' in the School's gallery. Over 60 people consisting of parents/grandparents/siblings attended an informal gathering at the gallery to view the students' impressive artworks.

Kate Watson, Head of Visual Arts at Monte Sant Angelo praised the program:

"...attendance is always a measure of success and we have had almost 100% every week and students coming in their own time to extend their work at lunchtimes! From our point of view, a really successful pilot in so many ways. Thank you"

Following on from the success of the YVSP pilot, the Arts & Culture team will:

- continue to build relationships with local high schools promoting the value of the program to young people and continue to develop and strengthen the YVSP.
- continue to evolve the program offering to ensure that it meets changing needs
- continue to ensure that the program is youth centered
- work closely with Council's Youth Team to identify opportunities to work with young people who are outside or on the edge of mainstream school structures to ensure YVSP remains inclusive and beneficial to all young people across the LGA.

YVPS 2020/2021 COUNCIL REPORT

Bradfield Senior College students' installation '**Cultural Evolutionists (Evolution of Sydney)**' was presented as part of Bradfield Senior College's wider curriculum program *ReGeneration* on 27 and 28 May 2021.

Group Concept and Outcomes

"Sydney's or rather Australia's culture is the product of its unique history, of which certain events are often glossed over. Our installation's focus is the unravelling of this history so that the audience can experience it chronologically to understand the past and their role in the writing of the future. Fabric, being a versatile medium, was a natural choice for our canvas, and the experience of a walk through a corridor reflecting Australia's timeline and the possible ways our culture could evolve in the future. Original artworks, primary source material (such as the Referendum), photos and text are layered across fabric walls like a collage, overlaid with graffiti, ripped posters, and other remnants. The end of the installation offers a choice that explores the individual's and collective's influence on a nation."

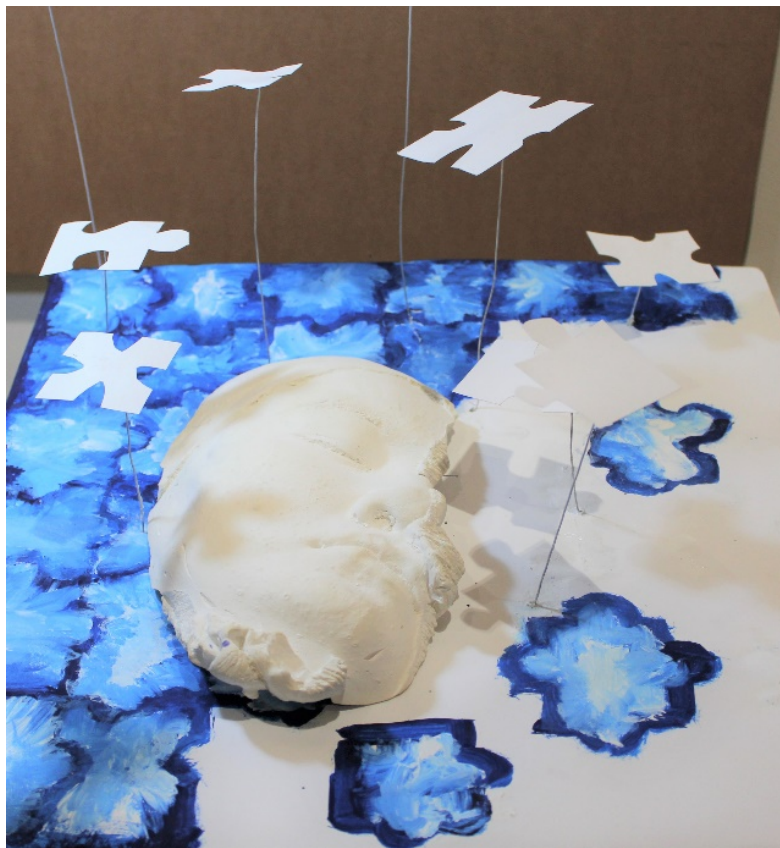


Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College students from years 7-11 presented an exhibition titled *'Self Expression'* in the school's gallery. Over 60 people consisting of parents/grandparents/siblings attended an informal gathering at the gallery to view the students' artwork on Thursday 28 May 2021.

Project Concept and Outcomes

Students worked on individual conceptual sculptural self portrait projects. Acting as facilitator, Alex guided students through the process of developing their idea into a finished artwork. Students learned about the process of sculptural casting, casting parts of their face, hands or feet. Students were then helped to develop their creative self portrait. Paul McDonald helped students write about their work and present their work in a gallery setting as a cohesive story. While students were given a general framework, they were encouraged to develop their own interpretations and vision and maintain agency over their ideas and expression.



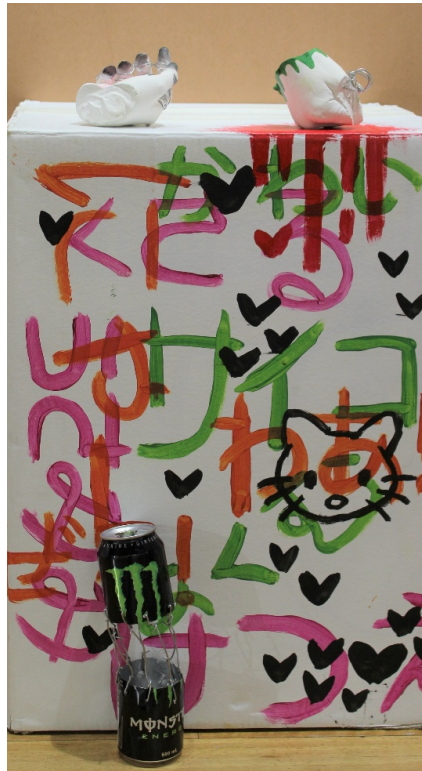


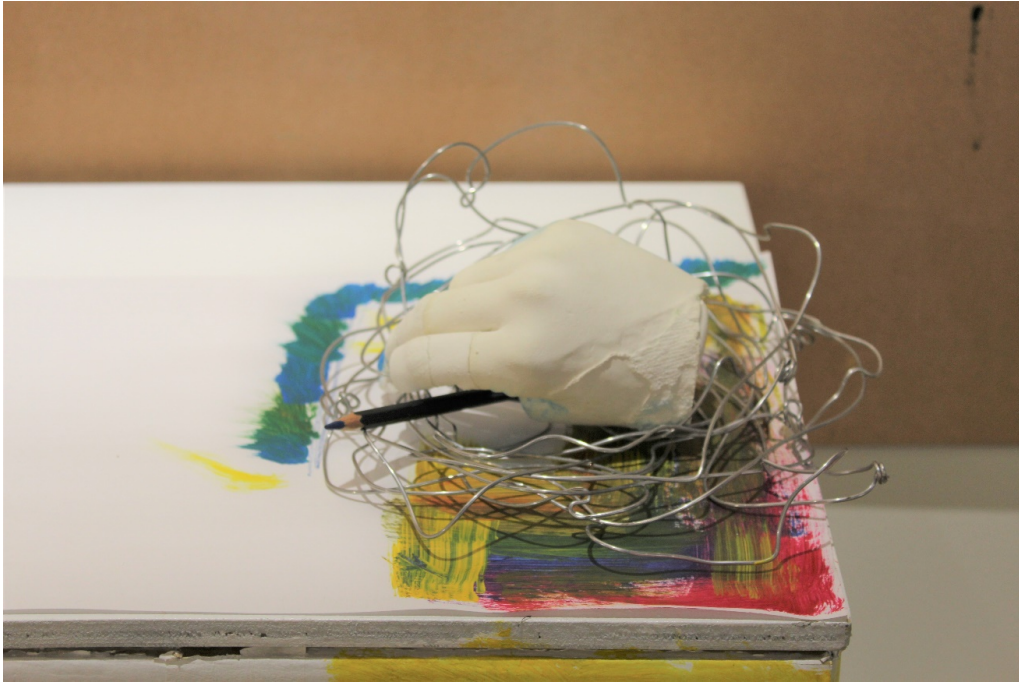














Selected students' artwork reflections

Lucinda Bradley
Year 9
Misunderstood Content
 Plaster, wire, acrylic paint, found objects

I have created this piece as a representation of how I feel about myself and about the way others perceive me. The 'self-portrait' aims to portray the way that I am constricted by my personal standards and societal standards and how they manipulate my self-expression.

I aim to create a content expression on my face, conveying the way that I feel about myself and the way that I believe that I come across to others. However, the trap, represented by shoelaces symbolise of my constriction of character because of my will to do good. The redness of my cheeks is also symbolic of the fear to 'unlock the trap' and my ability to become easily embarrassed.

The hands represent my love of practical work and my love of sport. Their intricate detail conveys the variety experiences that I have endured and the way that they have affected the person I am today. The failures and victories are represented on a trail that I have created through the winding and twisting of the wire.

These elements of the artwork, comprised of found objects and media, intend to create a minimalist representation of how I am perceived.

This self-portrait represents my own personal understanding of myself and how my personality can be contrasted towards those around me. The use of winding wires and found objects translates the sense of being trapped by societal and personal expectations. The ideas of fear and lack of self-expression are what summarise the piece, however, this is contradicted due to my content nature.

Although there is contentedness, there is also the knowing of what lies deeper.

Victoria Vandoros
 Year 9
 "Captive Roses"
 Wire, plaster, ribbon, found objects

I created my work to express the feeling of captivity within today's society and how creativity is stifled by the rigid social structures that have been put in place over many millennia. My art work demonstrates the endurance of these social structures, as aspects of my artwork are aged and look like they've been there for years. I expect that my audience will be intrigued by the multiple layers to my artwork and leave my exhibition with more questions and a wider curiosity of the creativity - social structure dilemma we have in our current society. My artwork fits in with the other artworks in this exhibition as they all have the key idea of the artist's self expression. My mother has been an influence on my artwork as she shows and represents the red roses, she has been a great influence to me because she showed me that you don't have to conform to social stereotypes and you can be an individual reaching out from Society standards. The fluidity of the ribbons in the background show that although the social structures are rigid they move and flow with the times but never change.

It's ironic how my writing style is so formal and structured just like the standards that have been put in place, it doesn't falter when the light of the conversation changes and it always has this structure. These standards are so sewn into our lives that even the way I express myself is structured like the rest of it.

Saskia King

Year 11

Title of work - Untitled

Medium - Plaster, acrylic paint, glass, plastic, various found objects

"When I discover who I am, I'll be free." - Ralph Ellison

Through the medium of plaster casting, painting and the assembly of personal objects, I have created a work that is an exploration of my self identity. Fragility and instability are brought to the forefront through dark, messy imagery and bleak colours. As well as this, the hardships of developing identity and questioning *Who am I?* In my formative years are brought to light.

However, looking past this frontage reveals a more vivid interiority, objects of comfort, of past memories, nostalgia and blooms of colour hidden beneath the surface.

Georgia Lowry

Year 8

No Longer Human

Wire, acrylic paint, plaster, air dried clay, metal, pins, gems, watercolour paint, black fabric.

This work describes the sense of feeling out of place from the rest of humanity. The piece and title were inspired by the book *No Longer Human* by Osamu Dazai. I wanted my artwork to take the inspiration from the book through the way Dazai feels disconnected from the other people in his life during the book, and show that through different elements of my artwork. I created the work to show the difference between a person's humanity and society, which can be more prevalent during tough times.

I used the mould of the hand with wire wrapped around it to show the bonds of society, and the speared heart to show a loss of empathy. The trail of hearts shows everyone else in the world. The black mess at the front of the box shows the messiness of feeling like this.