

Art Lab 2008: The Exhibition

I can't draw. My total lack of ability meant I grew up believing art wasn't for me. Dumping the subject as soon as I had the option in early high school, I had no desire to visit galleries and my attitude towards anything that required artistic ability was flippant. If it were not for that fateful enrolment in a pre-tertiary art craft and design class in Year 12, having ignorantly mistaken Graphic Design for Marketing, I may never have realised the myriad opportunities the arts industry offers, many of which are exciting, inspiring and don't exclude those who can't draw.

It was this experience that sowed the seeds for Art Lab 2008. The core principals of Art Lab 2008 are to engage high school students from both art and non-art backgrounds in the discussion of visual art and expose them to the many possibilities it can offer. Research into how to deliver this seemingly simple concept opened a can of worms in the field of outreach art education, and Art Lab 2008 quickly evolved into an all encompassing project, more complex and set to reach greater achievements than initially realised.

Projects were designed to reflect real-world professional situations, many uncommon to the regional area of Devonport. The key goal driving each project was the development of a tangible product that communicates ideas. Participants were encouraged to think independently, and as each



group slowly took ownership of their individual project the tutors stepped back to become guides who assisted rather than led. This sense of trust and independence, coupled with a challenge to produce something participants could both see and measure, encouraged students to take pride in their work and develop confidence as they shaped the outcomes into a form that truly represented their 'voice'.

To meet the challenges of the project, students from local high schools were brought together, forming small groups, to share ideas and strengths, assist each other and take on equal responsibility. Perhaps it was the shared situation of being in a new environment or possibly the positive excitement creative challenges can generate, but regardless, all projects saw the development of personal growth and the bond of a team. As individuals from varying backgrounds told of past experiences, friendships were formed and the outcomes were truly collaborative.

The friendships established between participants were not the only relationships to develop. Art Lab's success relied upon input and support from a wide external network, for it is impossible to deliver such a program independently. Journalists and editors from the Devonport Times, Coast FM, Edge Radio and Apple magazine; teachers and principals from participating



schools; various artists and curators; and members of the local public such as shop owners and people on the street all played an active role. Building bridges, Art Lab 2008 grew into a large and dynamic program that was initiated and managed by the Gallery but became a community project.

Students became at home in the Gallery space, comfortable to approach art and express formed opinions. With art reflecting life and all its subjects, the program became a platform from which to venture into discussion about personal experiences and perspectives, in turn sparking deeper philosophical conversation. It was proof that visual art can go beyond something we just look at and become a place where ideas are sparked, knowledge is shared and investigations are made into who we are and the world around us. This created an environment where students could open up and connect while also realising their own strengths and abilities. These intangible outcomes are arguably more important than the products made, despite the fact they are hard to measure or illustrate and can only be partly encapsulated in a process of formal evaluation. They are also a reminder that perhaps some things simply belong 'in the moment'.

Art Lab 2008 proved to be an educational experience for students and staff alike. The program has come a

long way from the original concept of helping those who can't draw engage with the arts and realise some of the career possibilities available in creative industries. I feel fortunate to have had practical involvement with every Art Lab 2008 session, and the opportunity to witness the students' personal growth. Privy to a colourful array of personalities which created an energetic and enthusiastic atmosphere, I was introduced to an assortment of ideas, sensibilities, humour and often insightful responses that were inspiring, particularly in my position as Public Programs Officer.

The exhibition is a colourful and energetic display celebrating the students' achievements, while providing an outlet for the participants' ideas and opinions. It is a reminder of the power of art; its ability to assist us to grow, learn, share and be inspired; to allow us to communicate in various formats; and to bring individuals and groups together to create friendships and community.

Josie Hurst 2008
Exhibitions and Public Programs Officer

UR Say



UR Say Tutors:
Josie Hurst, Vicky Xypteras

UR Say 1
Ethan Barron, Joey Clarke,
Georgia Elliott, Samantha Ewins,
Kyle Hind

UR Say 2
Lucy Knowles, Taylor Murphey,
Teneille Tress

UR Say was designed to provide a platform for students to discuss and review visual art for either the radio or newspaper. This deepened their understanding of visual art while focusing on developing communication techniques and learning the fundamentals of journalism. Students worked as a team to discuss and evaluate exhibitions at galleries in Devonport, Burnie and Hobart. Exhibition reviews were then workshopped for publication in the *Devonport Times* or airing on Wynyard's Coast FM.

This program worked towards the highlight of a three-day trip to Hobart with the challenge of writing a review about numerous exhibitions in Hobart or to present one live on Edge Radio. The students visited several galleries including Carnegie Gallery, Tasmanian Museum and Art

Gallery, Long Gallery, Plimsoll, CAST and artist run initiatives 6a and Inflight. From the contemporary to the traditional, an enormous variety of artwork was seen including photographs, drawing, graffiti-style works, installation, printmaking, sculpture, video and painting.

Students were encouraged to consider the exhibitions as a whole, learning about the role of a curator and how the different galleries vary in purpose and style. Throughout the program students were introduced to a number of art professionals: gallery directors, artists, curators, gallery staff and art critics

giving them a unique perspective of the operations in a gallery environment.

UR Say worked with contemporary visual art more directly than the other programs in the Art Lab 2008 program. Students were presented with new challenges which they took on with enthusiasm and gusto, producing reviews far exceeding original expectations. In many ways *UR Say* was an art appreciation class but the production of reviews gave it an objective with a real-world feel. It provided a fantastic outlet for the students to express their personal opinions and then communicate them to the wider community.

The content was great and I felt that I have developed a great deal both in understanding art/interpreting art and as a critical writer. It was great to be exposed to all different genres and types of art and it allowed me to understand abstraction and a lot more which is fantastic

Ask It



Ask It Tutors:
Josie Hurst, Vicky Xypteras

Ask It 1
Julia Andrew, Lauren Boyd,
Ashleigh Brundritt, Abbie Davis,
Samantha French, Anna Martin,
Tamika McLaren, Allan Nesbitt

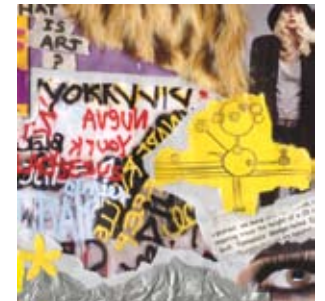
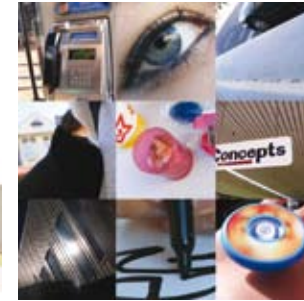
Ask It 2
Anna Brain, Kate Beveridge,
Amelia Davenport, Sarah Shaw,
Joseph Turnbull, Matthew Smith

Ask It was an active four-day program which ran twice throughout the year. Students worked as a team to produce either a book or pamphlet and posters responding to a philosophical question about art. Using a number of team-based exercises and brain storming the students led the project deciding how to collate a response from the public. Once their answers were gathered the students then chose the 'look and feel' and designed the layout of their publications.

What is art? Think you know the answer? This question can be more difficult to answer than first appears. As the first *Ask It* group discovered, peoples' responses can vary as far as your imagination can take you. The students devised a number of creative ways to collect a response from the Devonport public. With a display in the Rooke Street Mall they encouraged people to reply to the question using playdough, paint, pencils and collage. They also photographed their surroundings in response to vox pops, negotiated with cafe owners to attach

butcher's paper to their tables inviting anonymous replies, drew chalk murals on the pavements with a yes/no tally and dressed up as 'Art Angels' for people to respond by writing on their calico costume. Students also made personal responses ranging from wordy descriptions to collages or drawings.

The vibrant collection of answers has been made into a small print publication balancing the deep and philosophical reflections with other more comical and whimsical answers.



Thank you for offering this fantastic opportunity, I have gained a great amount of insight into art and will remember this experience forever



Why do we have art? This question can make us stop and ponder art's purpose and in reverse what a world without art could be like. The second *Ask It* group was presented with the challenge to create a response in the form of a foldout pamphlet and 7 A1 posters to be displayed in the exhibition. With a more text-based response than the previous group this team of students decided to ask the public in the mall to submit a written response. They also distributed response-boxes at the library, shops and cafes. The replies were then categorised into emerging themes: the jovial, philosophical, the apathetic and the classic line of, 'I don't know'. Students worked busily to respond to the text and create a dynamic visual display.



The main skills I learnt during Art Lab is interpreting, analysing, evaluating and forming opinions

What we did in Art Lab was awesome! I have learnt a lot from it and will benefit from it in the future! Something I wont forget

Shoot



Shoot Tutors:
Josie Hurst, Telen Rodwell

Shoot 1
Jesse Connors, Devin Heger,
Tama Rakei, Jabin Shaw

Shoot 2
Timothy Kariotis, Danny Smith,
Helen Treloar, Kathryn Whiteley,
Cody Williams

Shoot challenged students to identify an element of visual art within the community and explore their chosen idea through the medium of film. This was an intensive four-day project where students learnt fundamental filmmaking skills including storyboarding, scriptwriting, character development, capturing footage and editing.

In groups of two students made either two short films; one is using the moving image and the other uses the static image; or one longer film that contained both elements. Students generated the static using a number of methods including photographs, drawing, collage or scanning a variety of materials and are introduced to the beginnings of animation possibilities.



Devonport Says No

Jesse Connors, Tama Rakei

Have you ever noticed how many signs there are around a small city like Devonport? *Devonport Says No* is a short film using the static image to comment on the abundance of signs that instruct the public and suggests that it can make us feel like zombies no longer able to think for ourselves.



The Rooke Street Mall

Devin Heger, Jabin Shaw

In 2006 the Rooke Street Mall had a facelift. As the council re-landscaped the mall area a large tree was chopped down and the children's play equipment was moved. Using the static image students question these changes and ask if the space has really been improved.



Angles

Devin Heger, Jabin Shaw

Have you ever thought about the architecture and design of skating? *Angles* is a short film using the moving image to take us on a journey through a skater's perspective of the world. Here we learn not just about the art of skating but also a little about the fashion intertwined with the sport.



Freedom

Timothy Kariotis, Helen Treloar

What does freedom mean to you? *The Leica/CCP Documentary Photography Award Touring Show* at the Devonport Regional Gallery had a series of photographs depicting pigeons being released from a cage hung next to a series with two people on a road trip around Australia. This juxtaposition inspired the students to consider notions of freedom. Using the moving and static image they explored what the concept means to individuals.



Graffiti

Jesse Connors, Tama Rakei

What is your opinion on graffiti? Like most cities, Devonport is subject to it. *Graffiti* is a short film using the moving image and it vox pops members of the public to give their opinion on the subject. It's good, it's bad, it's ugly, are just some of the many types of responses collected.



Shoot News

Danny Smith, Kathryn Whiteley, Cody Williams

'Change is a fact of life and today I will be comparing the old generation to the new generation known as generation Y'. This is the opening line to the short film *Shoot News*. In mockumentary style the team from 'Shoot News' explores changes in the Devonport Community. Subjects covered include changes over time at the Devonport docks, the growing abundance of graffiti, the fashion and the food outlets. This comical short film using both the moving and the static image feature some colourful characters developed by the students as they engage with numerous members from the public including people on the street, shop owners and a local ship spotter.

Now I can look at a picture and understand it

The Devonport Gallery was a great place to work and communicate ideas. The setting was open and easy

Art Lab opened my eyes to career opportunities

Art Lab was a very challenging and enjoyable experience, thank you so very much for giving me this unique opportunity to broaden my knowledge of art in the real world!

It was an awesome experience and the work set was perfect

The best thing about Art Lab is leaning what I learnt from the tutors and making great friendships

The worse thing about Art Lab is that it ended! I really enjoyed it!

The Lighthouse Can Do Will Do Project is an early intervention initiative that equips young 'at-risk' people and young offenders in the Mersey region with role models and mentors who will help provide them with knowledge, skills and attitudes to be successful in life. The project delivers diverse community based activities to re-engage young people with their community through the fostering of ownership, community pride, connectedness and relationships.

Acknowledgements

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Program and Apple. A big thankyou goes to the staff at these organisations who enthusiastically provided not just the essential resource, but shared their time and professional knowledge - Kate Jowett, Rochelle Galloway, Karin Broady, Brett Salter, Mel Page, Shauna Mayben Swanson, Matt Ward, Wayne Brooks and Kelly Eijdenberg.

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