

Opening speech Chronicle Junior Art Expo

TRAG 16 May 2012 Jennifer Wright (Summers)

Thank you Allan , Toowoomba Art Society, The Chronicle and the wonderful staff of our Regional Art Gallery. I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Giabel and Jarowir people, their elders past and present.

This fresh and fabulous exhibition is just what ACT's envisages for Toowoomba. It showcases the region as a vibrant and creative centre for the arts. The young artists whose lively works we see here do make Toowoomba a more exciting and beautiful place. Art attracts all of us, draws us in closer to each other. It strengthens bonds between us as we share experiences and stories. This power of Art comes from a process I will try to describe and illustrate in my talk.

Creating art can be great fun. I bet all artists here have seen a smile, that your art has put on someone's face. Yet making Art has value beyond the smiles it puts our faces - it is **valuable work** that benefits the artist as well as the community.

The **thought processes** we use in coming up with a worthwhile **idea** for a piece of art involves **sorting and selecting** from the overload of information that bombards us. How useful is that skill in our virtual and real worlds?

We search for meaning and ask ourselves **what is important?** Such thinking helps us to form attitudes and beliefs. What is more useful than a good idea? We see strong ideas here – *Katherine Rummenie's skilfully executed ape girl* makes us think. Her idea talks to us deeply as we enjoy the visual treat.

Time to think is very precious and creative thinking **opens our minds** and helps us discover who we are or can become – more tolerant and appreciative of cultural diversity – as in *Sarah Aliassim, Riley Meara's portraits and Erin Meyers, Gabriella Kunde and Alix Hyde's Indigenous art*. David Curtis whose estate is one of our sponsors was interested in social justice would have appreciated these.

Fresh young eyes explore and bring new life to familiar things – artists becoming more **aware** of what's around and finding beauty in unexpected places – *Louise Armstrong's shoe, Grace Hooper's classroom and Marjia Brownlies' posy*. Awareness of what's around us, situational awareness can save our lives.

The next stage in making art is planning how we are going to convey our chosen ideas. What materials will we use? Do I need to collect **materials**, tools, surfaces? What techniques will I use? I have seen artists' studios that are wonderfully ordered

with the next project organised and ready to go. Drawings help us **plan and imagine** our work.

Some **Took risks** bravely added materials to drawings and prints – *the feather in Hannah Donohue's horse and the origami hangings in Isobel Murray's vacuum cleaner engaged my curiosity –was this planned?*

The **techniques** and **skills we are learning** give us more ways/tools to express ideas.

Drawing is the most essential skill for any artist. The skilful drawing we see here has developed from one of our earliest acts of mark making. Do we draw before we could write or use words? At a young age *Irish Vinegas' intriguing black line figure* demonstrates great skill and humour. *Rosie Gordon's friends and Marli Roos' confident charcoal portrait* and many more pieces show well developed drawing skills. *Georgia Shine's nude* is sensational. Let's hope you all keep drawing. It's something you can take with you – you may explore new media like animation.

Problem-solving goes on throughout the process – thoughts that pop into the artists' minds. I hope this doesn't happen in Maths classes. It often happens as we wake to get on with another busy day. **Resolving**, 'Yes, I will put the figure to the left and leave space in front.' or 'I will simplify the background to make the figure stand out.' The strength of Bronte Holding's portrait results from such thinking. Keeping it simple can also apply to our lives.

We can see how decisions like these create **mood** in *Anna Southwell's emotional blue print* and *Jade Moffatt's* tonal-point-style child.

What creates the wonderful energy and movement in *Ellaryn Gilbert's lively horse* or *Jessica Fitzgibbons' and Vinson Yeung's* moving figures? **Creative ideas** are on show everywhere – the *mythical creatures by Anna Laffin, Charlotte Whitley and Tom Glasheen* and the originality of *Karri McPherson's print*. Our world needs creative thinkers and problem solvers.

Nick Drew's skeleton under the bed drew me in to explore the detail. Where does that string go?

Originality is of great value not just in Art, but in science, technology (look at how successful people could put things together in new ways with all our gadgets), government (we need more creative politicians) and business.

Artists learn to **focus and observe** everyday things bringing new life to the ordinary. We can see this ability in *John Henry Craig's beautiful snail*, *Emma Anderson's*

portrait and Ava Marjoribanks' gum nuts and in the direct observation in the still life drawings from Glennie Junior.

For me Making the piece – the feel of charcoal on paper, getting the brushes loaded with colour ... placing the paint on the surface is the reward and sheer pleasure after the hard decisions of finding the idea, planning and learning the techniques.

This joy in using paint can be seen upstairs in the three stunning portraits by Madison Griinke-Visser and the dog in the hat.

This opportunity to be in the moment of creation is my bliss. Sure there will be more aesthetic decisions as we work and rework our pieces and ... It can be messy! Did anyone find ink under your nails when making the fine examples of printmaking that so attract us in this display? I'm really impressed with the excellence of the printing – from Kaitlin Campbetis' detailed three-plate etching near the front door to Claudia Yang's two piece composition in the back? How did you keep the prints so clean?

Let's thank your dedicated Art teachers who help our young artists create artworks of high quality.

Making a work of art can be quick or take a very long time. Speaking of time, it's time to invite you all to enjoy these wonderful creations.

Congratulations to all artists who entered the Junior Art Expo. You art has power so please keep going with it. You are all justified in feeling very proud...

I now declare the 2012 Junior Art Expo open. Enjoy!