

Small Resources BIG IMPACT – Future Directions: Student Perspectives

An initiative of the New England Regional Art Museum to promote Youth Arts

Future Directions: Student Perspectives is a student project which gives New England students an opportunity to experience the behind-the-scenes curatorial work of compiling an exhibition and creating their own artworks.

Inspiration is drawn from the paintings in NERAM's permanent collections: Howard Hinton, Chandler Coventry and NERAM Collections. Each student chooses a work from the Collections, often creating a theme for the exhibition and then uses that work as inspiration for a painting of their own. Local Walcha artist Angus Nivison has assisted in the studio in the past couple of years.

Students are also encouraged to take part in the publicity of the exhibition. This includes media activities such as writing a media release and designing an invitation. Radio and newspaper interviews were conducted by the students to attract a wide range of viewers.

Finally they are able to hang the exhibition in the gallery with the assistance of the NERAM Staff.

In 2001, thirteen year 11 students (from Armidale and District schools) participated in the project which culminated in an exhibition at NERAM. The student's work was hung along side the paintings that inspired them. Some of their works were influenced by body image, childhood and friendship. Others were motivated by landscapes and still lifes to create stunning works of art..

The students acquired and developed numerous drawing, painting and analytical skills during the process of this programme. Each student began by priming her own canvas. This was followed by workshop drawing sessions until they were ready to paint. The students clearly appreciated the opportunity to work with a practising and well known artist in studio conditions. Many told NERAM staff how much fun they had, and (tellingly) expressed that they felt 'privileged' to have been part of *Future Directions*.

Funding for this project was minimal. NERAM was, however, fortunate to be supported by **Chroma Australia**, who subsidised this project by supplying students with best artist quality acrylic and oil paint, and **Armidale Art Supplies** who discounted many other essential items. ■

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