

# IMMERSED IN ART AT BUNDANON



For many artists, the passion to create begins when they are quite young and igniting, fostering and guiding those initial forays into the artistic realm is both a joy and a responsibility for our Junior School educators. Michele Marquet writes about the Junior School's inaugural Junior School Art Camp at Bundanon.

**CRANBROOK HAS A LONG TRADITION OF** honouring the visual arts, recognising its power to interpret and make sense of our complex world and a human's place within it. Amongst our alumni, we have more than our fair share of gifted painters, architects and sculptors, art curators and gallery owners, digital artists, filmmakers and illustrators. Pablo Picasso captured the power of the arts when he wrote: *Art is a lie that makes us realise truth*. The arts promote self-understanding and at Cranbrook we see the arts as one of the most important pillars of what it is to be human, sitting alongside the pillars of the academic, the spiritual and the physical.

Proposed by Richard Baker, Junior School Deputy Head (Staffing and Operations), and supported by our Visual Arts Teachers, Ann Arora and Christian Bonett, the Junior School recently held its inaugural Junior School Art Camp: an exciting opportunity to bring together some of our young Cranbrook Junior School students for whom art and its creation already forms an important element of who they are as people.

In early May, 24 Year 5 and Year 6 students travelled together to beautiful Bundanon with Richard, Ann and Christian, as well as Heather Brodie and Michele Marquet. Having submitted a portfolio of their own artwork, the students were selected to attend and participate in artmaking experiences within an inspiring landscape. The Bundanon educators, together with our own Cranbrook staff, offered opportunities for our students to explore a series of artistic challenges to purposefully develop skills and conceptual understanding.

Artists respond to what they observe and live, and our young artists are no different. Inspired by the glorious manmade and natural environment found at Bundanon, influenced by what they saw and felt; taught by talented experts how to look afresh and use new techniques; and given time, that most precious of gifts, they passionately created artworks of extraordinary quality. There is no better way to appreciate the true value of their experience and what it meant to them, than through their own reflections.

## The Environment

Bundanon, gifted by artist Arthur Boyd in 1993, means 'deep valley' in the local Dharawal language. The art museum is embedded on 1000 hectares of bushland, overlooking the deep, winding Shoalhaven River. It is also a wildlife sanctuary. Rory Murrhny (Year 5) was fascinated by the wombats and kangaroos he saw at Bundanon, as well as the chance to contemplate the natural world. "The wildlife was really interesting to watch," he wrote, "(as was) the huge mountain to our left that towered over me ... The trees were fascinating to see their bendy shapes." This chance to 'see anew' was significant for many of our students who revelled in the opportunity to create art in a place of such natural beauty. George Fyfe (Year 5) wrote: "As I stepped off the bus ... the most beautiful sight came to greet me ... As I looked on in awe, I knew that the next few days would be amazing. In the morning, I woke to a jaw-dropping aurora of colour, as the great sun rose over the river and, at night, I went to sleep under the huge puffy clouds trying, but failing, to block out the bright, inky moon." Jacob Kaddour (Year 6) and Jamie Petsoglou (Year 6) were also inspired by the sunrise. "Through my rectangular window, I saw the navy river complemented by the silvery moonlight," wrote Jacob. "Above the jagged hills on the horizon, a subtle coral-orange light engraved in the sky stood out against the ebony black sky. It all went by so fast, but as the coral-orange grew into crimson, which then grew into sunflower yellow, it was like a priceless painting." Jamie was so taken by the sunlight he rushed to grab his sketch pad, "and drew a picture of the mind-blowing view of the sunrise. The sun was sandwiched between two giant mountains which were mapped by glorious deep green trees. It was like waking up calmly in the most beautiful dream in existence."

The students appreciated the chance to get away from the city, enjoying the peace of the place. "When I arrived at Bundanon, I felt so peaceful," wrote Kaspar Buck (Year 5). "Being in the wilderness made me feel very happy and calm. While I was in Bundanon, I didn't have to worry about my busy life, but (the) beautiful artwork that I was creating." Leo Marchant-Williams (Year 6) found himself 'lost' in the landscape: "The landscape (was) truly magnificent ... It felt so peaceful being away from all my worries and being able to relax and draw in this beautiful area."

## Junior School

### Art Gallery Visit

The Art Museum at Bundanon houses a changing programme of contemporary exhibitions. Oliver Klaas (Year 6) was inspired by his visit. "The first experience that I had was the tour through the museum: seeing all the creativity put into the different pieces absolutely sparked the artistic side of me. One piece that I found really interesting was the green sculpture – it made me feel a mixture of emotions and thoughts. I could not really make out what it was, but for some reason I just loved the feel of it. It started my artistic journey throughout Bundanon." Henry Marwat (Year 6) loved the museum because it gave him the opportunity to "see all kinds of art; painting, sculpture and even pottery and stop motion. I liked the sculpture that looked like kelp."

### Exploration

*Creativity takes courage* wrote Henri Matisse. Our students were exposed to a wide-variety of mediums and styles to work with during their stay, from acrylic landscape painting, charcoal drawing, to Indigenous symbol drawing as well as reed and ink drawing. "I was able to try things I haven't done before," wrote James Chau (Year 5). "I probably enjoyed the painting with the acrylics the most, although I would love to try my hand again at charcoal. It was tricky getting the details right when painting and creating a 3D effect because I naturally love drawing and sketching the most – but it was great to be challenged."

**I want Bundanon to be accessible to any Australian whose life can be enriched by interaction with creative artists.**

ARTHUR BOYD

### Reed and Ink Drawing

Many of our students loved the opportunity to work with reed and ink. "I learnt that not every artwork needs to use the materials we use at school: we used reed and ink to draw a lovely landscape," wrote Oscar Rouse (Year 5). "The feel of the reed in my hand was so smooth and comfortable ... I loved this activity!" Ziggy Day (Year 5), found that "this experience has boosted my confidence with ink and was wonderful," while Oscar Leppinus (Year 5) loved the challenge. "I am so proud of the final results," he wrote. "This was one of my favourite artworks that I have ever done."



### Charcoal Drawing

Another highlight was an opportunity to work with charcoal. "We did this by layering the whole page of grippy paper with charcoal and then rubbing out portions of the charcoal to create incredibly detailed portraits of one of a kind of trees. This experience was amazing and I will definitely be experimenting more with this medium," wrote Jamie Petsoglou (Y6). It was the favourite activity of Alexander Pontifix (Year 5) and Sam Spry (Year 5). "If you asked me my favourite thing about this camp, I would probably say the charcoal," wrote Alexander. "It opened up a whole new discipline of drawing for me, and new areas to experiment in. I love the shading technique especially, making our artworks hyper-realistic and super dramatic." Sam loved the chance to use the different materials: "I found it very amusing because we used all different materials. It was a little strange at first (but) the finishing touches were so realistic." Christian Tsirbas (Year 5) loved drawings with charcoal because "it was almost like I was drawing with fire."

Playing with technique was also inspiring for Angus Davies (Year 5) and Rylan Hedley (Year 5). "Charcoal is a unique style of art because it is reverse art. What I mean by that is, the charcoal is the rubber and the rubber is the charcoal," wrote Angus. "I found the trick to make it look more realistic – using a shadow, shade and ghost trees, all of these techniques learnt from our guides." Rylan loved that it "was super interesting how we had to rub out to draw. I had so much fun doing it and I think it was my best piece of art. Not only because it was a good drawing, but because it was so good to learn techniques for creating art."

### First Nations Symbol Drawing

On the first evening the students were introduced to First Nations symbolic painting. This was the favourite activity for Balthazar Roche (Year 5): "I really enjoyed this particular activity. I love learning about different cultures because I can imagine them adapting to their environment. I loved it even more when we got to express ourselves, drawing our own symbols." For Ziggy Day (Year 5) it was a chance to learn and also consider his own beliefs. "I (learnt) a lot about the culture of our First Nations Peoples," he wrote. "This painting was fun, representing our beliefs. It ... improved my knowledge about First Nations Peoples and made me think about what I believe."

### Acrylic Landscape Painting

Finally there was the chance to use acrylics. "My favourite part of the art camp (was) using the acrylic paints to create a colourful moving landscape," wrote William Holt (Year 5). The students learnt about colour theory and mixing acrylics; something that inspired Kaspar Buck (Year 5) Harry Retief (Year 6) and Finn Whiteman (Year 6). "I enjoyed the acrylic paintings because I loved learning all the painting techniques. I learnt about layers and how you can kind of plan out your painting with them. I really liked learning about tones and how to make your painting more 3D, which was really cool," wrote Kaspar. "My favourite activity (was when) we learnt about mixing colours to create really realistic ones," wrote Harry. Finn "highly enjoyed the painting because I love colour theory and mixing acrylics. Although my final product wasn't that great, the experience was incredible. From the high-quality equipment to the inspiring view, this activity has helped me achieve a new level of enjoyment in art."

Others enjoyed the chance to paint *en plain air*: "My favourite activity throughout this experience (was) the acrylic painting of the river," wrote Leo Marchant-Williams (Year 6). "I found this a peaceful, calming experience and tried my hardest to reflect that in my painting. Within this activity, I discovered many new strategies and tips to improve my art. Yanni Alexander (Year 6) appreciated the opportunity to "paint in the wild, and look at what I was looking at, in real life."



### Overall...

Our students came away from the camp inspired by their experiences, and appreciative of the opportunity to make new friends. "This experience has been one of the most amazing things I have ever done in my life. It has brought me together with old and new friends, the artworks were astonishing, and the scenery was beautiful. I'm very thankful for the amazing accommodation and warm meals," wrote Sam Spry (Year 5). "We did so much art here! ... We learnt so many new things. I loved everything about this camp!" wrote Julian Rozsa (Year 6). Jansen Jiang (Year 6) summed up the camp perfectly when he wrote about his appreciation of new friends and his realisations about art. "During this camp, I realised that art should not be perfect, but include an experiment. This has helped me be less self-conscious about my work and more willing to try again if I cannot do something the first time." ■