

Case study

Connections

Details

What:

Visual artist Scott Charles worked with students in years 1, 5 and 6 at Beaudesert State School, using sensory language and inquiry to both explore and communicate the connections we have to the people and places around us. The students used art (both drawing and photography) as a method of enquiry to broaden and deepen ways of knowing and describing phenomena in their environment.

Students sought out interesting, iconic and obscure aspects of their local physical and social environments in which to capture or construct images. Using natural and urban macro photography to create and install ephemeral art works, the decay and beauty of those spaces were highlighted. Students were also engaged in the development of drawing and mark-making skills and constructed a series of drawings to creatively examine and explore scientific, mathematical and geographical concepts in new ways.

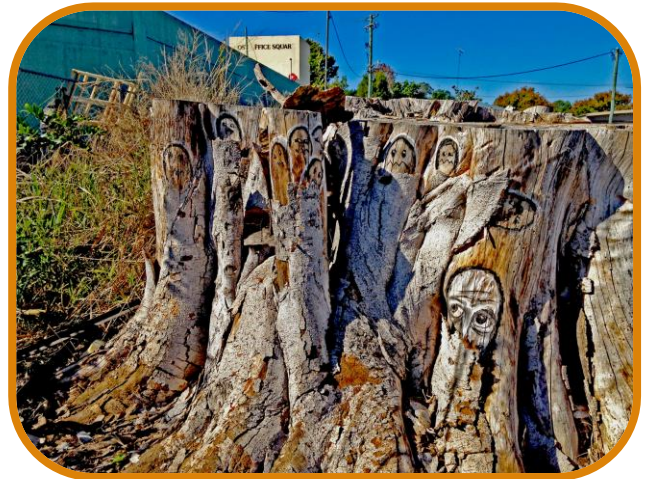
A significant component of the work was undertaken with senior students in the special education program, using image-making to fuel discussion about the way they move through their environment, socially and geographically. The project also supported educators across a number of disciplines to build their knowledge and capacity in arts-led learning processes.

When:

January – April 2015

Where:

Beaudesert



Ephemeral artwork, chalk and charcoal on tree stump, Beaudesert CBD. Image courtesy of Scott Charles.

Key stats:

- 130 students
- 5 educators
- 1 artist

Arts Queensland contribution:

\$20,000 – Artist in Residence program

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Outcomes

- Of 50 students surveyed about their experience of the project, all rated it as 'good' or 'excellent'.
- Students developed new understandings of art as a meaningful participative experience and increased their capacity to see creative potential in everyday contexts. This was reflected in comments from students:

We can make art out of anything! (Year 6 student)

I never used to like drawing, you have inspired me to draw and now I go home and do the art you have taught us at school. (Year 5 student)

- Educators gained confidence and skills in using art across the curriculum, and shared these skills and ideas with other teaching colleagues. Educators also expressed interest in continuing artist collaborations, and the school has committed funds to retain the artist in residence initiative for two hours per week.
- Based on the project's success, artist Scott Charles has also secured work with another school.



Untitled paste-up artwork, depiction of nearby flora, Beaudesert CBD. Image courtesy of Scott Charles.

Learnings and reflections

The project highlighted the importance of flexibility, in particular the need to adapt to changing environments:

2015 saw some structural changes in the school, in particular with special education which required adaption of the project plan for its second half. School business also impeded scheduled activities to some extent and a flexible approach to delivering proposed outcomes became necessary.

Artist Scott Charles saw this as a useful learning opportunity for himself as a practitioner:

I think that I have developed a greater ability to work around the life of the school and the reality that there is never a normal week. This project needed to be quite fluid and adaptable both with time and artistic process. This project worked across the school and needed to fit in and adapt. I believe that I have developed skills to be able to work in an adaptive way while retaining the artistic integrity and educational validity of the project.

This flexible mindset meant positive outcomes and learnings could be identified even when activities did not roll out as expected:

There were a few areas of focus that remained formative and experimental rather than being pursued to a finished art work. These included the research and construction of a cardboard box camera obscura. Unfortunately it proved technically challenging and time constraints restricted further development. It was however a really valuable process of artistic discovery and experimentation.