

Q&A

with Daelyn McKay (formerly Georgia McKay), student and Megan Campbell, teacher

Mary MacKillop College

Visual Art, Internal assessment 1: Investigation — inquiry phase 1 and Internal assessment 2: Project — inquiry phase 2

Daelyn McKay, student

Q: What did you enjoy most about Visual Art?

A: *I enjoyed the freedom that allowed us to explore our own ideas, values, and aspects of identity that branched further than some other lessons in school. Visual Art became an outlet for emotions and ideas, serving as both a place to vent and create, as well as develop valuable skills.*

Q: How did you prepare for this assessment task?

A: *Researching other artists and their work to spark inspiration and new experimental techniques was one of the most vital steps in Visual Art. In finding existing artists who covered similar subject matter or utilise similar stylistic tools, I discovered new techniques and symbolism that motivated me to work and create art that I truly resonated with.*

Q: How did your teacher prepare you for this assessment?

A: *Our teacher's dedication to our success was impeccable. She provided our senior class with research activities and excursions that would fuel new thoughts and creative ideas. Our main excursion, to St Stephen's Cathedral, was an experience from which we all benefited. Each of us was given the chance to consider our own definitions of identity and spirituality for IA2, and our results were magnificently individual and unique from one another.*

Q: What made you choose the topic or method of presentation?

A: *I chose to present my IA2 assessment piece in the form of a PowerPoint presentation. I felt that written words could convey my meaning and the complexity of the visual details better than I could do in person. The still images additionally allow those viewing the presentation to observe at their leisure.*

Q: What is most important to you when you are preparing a response to an assessment task?

A: *Regardless of the subject matter, the most important thing to me is that my response is authentic. Like many daring art students, I have no desire to speak gently on topics I am passionate about. IA2 was an assessment that I found especially enjoyable because it was a task that allowed me to express my conflicting feelings towards spiritual identity with minimal filter, allowing my response to be completely and utterly mine.*

Q: How will you use what you have learnt in this subject?

A: *I have known for many years that I wanted to enter into a creative field as a career path, particularly conceptual art. Prior to senior Visual Art, I doubted my ability to create deep and meaningful designs that were more than just pretty pictures, but Visual Art has allowed me to hone both my creative skills and ability to dive deeper than surface-level visuals. I will carry the explicit skills I learned in senior Visual Art all throughout my art career to come.*

Megan Campbell, teacher

Q: What was the purpose of this assessment and what key decisions were made in the design of the task?

A: Mary MacKillop College is a multicultural school with some 40 different nationalities. It is close to the cityscape of Brisbane. The students identify strongly with the Mary MacKillop charism (that is firmly centred in social justice) but are widely diverse in their religious and cultural context. When developing the stimulus, I took these traits into consideration. The IA1 immersion started with a visit to St Stephen's Cathedral, with particular emphasis on the Mary MacKillop Chapel that features the expressive work of sculptor John Elliott. Additionally, the work of Judy Watson is featured distinctly in the Cathedral's grounds. From here, the students embraced the city surrounds, walking through the Mall at lunchtime across the Brisbane River to lunch in the shady surrounds of GOMA. Following this, they spent the last hour exploring the gallery. The stimulus was designed to prompt a deep personal reaction and introspection. It was purposefully written to embrace the diversity of the cohort.

Q: How did your teaching and the student learning experiences prepare the students to complete this assessment?

A: I prepared the students with a pre-stimulus self-reflection that focused on their identity through both a cultural and personal lens. I exposed them to numerous contemporary Australian, Aboriginal and Torres Strait artists who communicated a distinct range of spiritual and cultural perspectives. I wanted them to feel encouraged to express their own emotions and imaginations. By immersing them in 'Art as knowledge' (both constructed and imaginative), I aimed to foster an individual response that could be either provocative or visionary.

Q: How does this assessment reflect the unique characteristics of your school and your students?

A: This assessment reflected the diversity of cultural and religious identities that make up the Mary MacKillop community. This was blended with an authentic social justice philosophy that is embedded throughout the curriculum.

Q: Can you explain the exemplary aspects of Daelyn's response?

A: Daelyn's body of work was astute, somewhat provocative, and non-conformist in its intention. Heavily symbolic, the work shows an individualised exploration of spiritual identity, departing from traditional religious iconography and communicating new forms of nostalgic and surreal expression. Sophisticated drawing skills were used to manipulate symbolic aspects of Daelyn's cultural background, such as Old English and Polish folklore. The lack of colour draws the viewer to the tonal and linear value of each portrait and the often-grotesque inhuman characteristics reminiscent of the work of Hieronymus Bosch. Daelyn's complex visual language is deeply constructed and highly imaginative. I believe this work exploring a personal spiritual identity engages the audience in a diverse and alternate framework.