

## *Beyond the frame*

*Pilot project funded by the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation*

*An example of integrating artworks, artists and site into an artmaking process*

*Beyond the frame* is a new and innovative visual arts project for NSW public schools, initiated by the Curriculum Support Directorate. A core component of the project is an image kit of approximately thirty works from regional galleries across NSW. Scheduled for release to schools early next year, the learning materials in the image kit will



encourage teachers, particularly of Years 5-8 students, to address literacy demands through teaching art.

Using artworks in the kit as a stimulus, local artists will work on programs with students across the state to produce work in response to the content of the artwork or artworks. This could take many forms, such as a response to a particular site or an exploration of the issues in the artwork studied. The resulting works will be exhibited in the local regional gallery, along with the work which provided the original stimulus. By developing and strengthening links between schools, galleries and artists, the project will assist students to engage more directly with artworks, artists, the world, and a wider audience.

To provide teachers with a model of how schools could be involved in the *Beyond the frame* project, a fifteen-minute video is being made for release with the kit. During September this year, Years 5 and 6 students at Scarborough Public School, north of Wollongong, worked with distinguished Australian artist, Colin Lanceley, to make a response to his painting, *South Coast: From Coalcliff Mine to D H Lawrence*, a work made in 1987 that is very much a response to the unique qualities of a landscape he knows well.

Scarborough PS was an obvious choice for the video, because the school, which is spectacularly located on the cliffs of the Illawarra escarpment, is situated within the site shown in the painting. In the four weeks leading up to the artist-in-residence session, the students were introduced to the concept of site-artwork-artist through studying various artists who “map the landscape”. Lanceley and the painting *South Coast* were included in the discussion but without special reference. Their recognition of the artist and the work would come in the gallery setting during the introduction to the residency workshop. The range of artists—including Olsen, Bea Maddox, Wolseley, Rover Thomas and Willy Tjungarrayi—represented ways of regarding the concept “mapping” for the students to engage in their own representations of the site.

The initial session was in the Wollongong City Gallery, where Colin Lanceley showed slides of his works to the students before focusing specifically on *South Coast: From Coalcliff Mine to D H Lawrence*. He then led the students and their teacher, Paul Petersen, on a tour of specific sites around Coalcliff, including lookouts on the top of the escarpment, which provided dramatic views of the coastal plain. The students made drawings and also collected objects as

preparation for making their own works. To help refine the students' awareness of composition, Lanceley played a game called "aesthetic chess" with them. Moving variously shaped wooden off-cuts around on a board, students were able to reflect critically on the relationship between the various visual elements, deepening their understanding of compositional processes.

Over the next two days, students developed their own works in the school's art space (a converted basement store). There was a complete lack of preciousness, as all works were made on recycled cardboard from the local tip! Colin moved among the students, helping them individually, as well as taking time out for regular "crit" sessions which involved everyone.

On the final day, a temporary display was mounted in the Wollongong City Gallery. It was fascinating to see the connections between the students' works and the stimulus work, *South Coast: From Coalcliff Mine to D H Lawrence*, and how their understanding of Lanceley's work had deepened. What to some students had at first seemed like a crazy, incomprehensible jumble was now a meaningful response to a site they had actually experienced! Paul Petersen commented on his students' enhanced awareness of their local environment and the enhancement of their critical skills. As Colin Lanceley said, the video, documenting the entire experience, will show how students anywhere can make artworks which are a response to their own world.

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The final day of filming in the Wollongong City Gallery.



Colin Lanceley with students and the film crew on Bald Hill, overlooking the Illawarra escarpment.