

2022 Visual Arts Exhibition

Elizabeth Richards- Guest Speaker Opening Address

Thank you, Rob, and thank you to Louise Hoy and the John XXIII Visual Arts Department for inviting me to open the John XXIII College Visual Arts Exhibition this year.

My name is Elizabeth Richards - previously Elizabeth Colgan. I attended John XXIII College in the mid 1980's when the school and WA Education were going through major changes. I was in year 12 in 1986 when the school moved to the new Mount Claremont campus where we are now standing, and I was pretty happy to have access to the brand new Art rooms that the students use today. This year was also the first year in WA that Visual Arts was offered as a full ATAR subject (it was TEE back then), giving it equal importance to all the other traditional subjects. As a kid who loved drawing, painting, pottery and anything art related I couldn't believe my luck. It was edifying to see that art was now being taken seriously as a subject. which allowed art and creatively orientated people like myself to use our skill set to achieve good grades and potentially see a future career in The Arts.

I did well at John XXIII thanks to my art mark and went on to UWA where I studied Fine Arts for 4 years. I then travelled and lived overseas for several years, where I was lucky enough to visit all the art works and galleries that I had studied throughout school and University.

Upon returning to Perth, I also finished a degree majoring in Graphic Design at Curtin University. Graphic Design gave me more scope for creative work, as well as important computer skills that have helped with my Art practice. In between having three children (who have all attended JTC) I have worked as a graphic designer, which has now become a side business. I now work full time as a visual artist, with lots of commissions that keep me pretty busy. I work in a photo realistic style with oil paint. Due to my design background, my work has a very graphic quality with a lot of attention paid to bold composition and colour. I also do a lot of detailed still life work, as I enjoy the intensity, discipline and patience required to achieve a realistic result. This is pretty much the career I dreamed of at school, and while it has taken awhile to achieve - it is possible! And very rewarding.

Looking around at the exhibition tonight I am blown away by the quality of ideas and the artistic skills that are on display. The work is so interesting and diverse, it makes me want to go back to art school. The Art Department is producing work way beyond our small beginnings of 36 years ago, and its brilliant to see so many more students choosing to study the Visual Arts. I have attended the end of year exhibitions for 19 years now and I congratulate Louise and the Visual Arts Team for the work they have done to make Visual Arts into such a successful subject at John XXIII College.

To the talented students here tonight, I want you to understand what an important gift you have been given. You have an aesthetic understanding of the world, an appreciation of and ability to create beautiful things, as well as a predisposition to exploring ideas, culture and human experience. The Visual Artists, the Designers (graphic, interior, fashion and industrial), Architects and Artisans are the creators of the world we inhabit...the clothes we wear; the building and garden spaces we live in; the objects we surround ourselves with and use; the ideas that dominate the culture of the time. It's no accident that throughout history the great religions and governments of the world have always patronized the greatest artists of their century; to visualise their spoken words and ideas, create soaring monuments and symbolise the ideas and aspirations that dominate the era.

Artists are also the first to question and react against old ideology, creating and visualising the fresh ideas of a new generation and modern times. An endless re-evaluation and regeneration of human culture.



Even if your career doesn't go down the arts avenue, having an artistic sensibility is an advantage in many different careers, helping with creative problem solving, better communication and possibly more elegant solutions.

And finally, I can say that keeping an artistic practice or sensibility in any form can bring a huge sense of joy, self-worth and comfort to your non-working life. Art is an end in itself, no one has to see it for it to be worthwhile. It is challenging and frustrating but also healing and exhilarating, a break from the more mundane aspects of living. The Visual Arts are a practice that is singular to human nature and something to be valued, encouraged and celebrated.

With that I am very pleased to declare the 2022 John XXIII College Visual Arts Exhibition open.



