

[Back to Artists In Schools](#)

Youth Education Centre, Magill



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Introduction

The Magill Campus of the Youth Education Centre (YEC) is a DECS facility within the Magill Training Centre, which is a Families SA operated remand and detention centre for male and female offenders aged 10-18 years of age. Students live on-site and attend school programs for 50 weeks of the year. Youth workers supervise the students at all times, including while students attend school. Security is of prime consideration, with teachers required to exercise close control of materials, equipment and keys. There are approx. 1,300 admissions during a twelve-month period to the YEC at the foothills in the residential area of Magill.

Aims:

- Students to effect positive change on the surroundings through Art.
- Students to engage in complex problem solving.
- Students will learn new technical skills and exposure to carving materials.
- Students will develop original ideas that reference their emerging Arts understandings (e.g. form, balance, composition, contrast, 2-D to 3-D)
- Expose the students to a professional artist and the way he works as well as to the broader arts industry.

The Artist:

John Whitney is a highly skilled visual artist well-known in South Australia and beyond. He has worked as an artist in schools for many years after spending his early career as a secondary visual arts teacher. He has worked extensively for Artists in Schools, Big Draw, City Sites and other Carclew projects and was awarded the Education and Arts Ministers' Award, in 2003, for his work in arts and education. John's experience and background made him the perfect artist for this project at the YEC.

The Process:

- The week before the project the students experimented with patterns and contrast and then examined the aesthetics of their designs to prepare them for the week ahead.
- During the sculpture project students were introduced to the concepts, materials and general location. John then showed examples of previous works he had been involved in and explained the processes of working and opportunities for an artist working in the community.
- Students were then asked to complete drawings of their ideas (contrasting geometric and organic patterns and forms) and then make a model of their final design.
- Students were then introduced to the carving tools and were asked to sketch and scratch out their ideas onto their hebel block.
- Students were taught sanding and finishing techniques.
- Installation of project.
- Constant communication and consultation with families SA regarding use of the site, students involved in the project and timeline of project.

Outcomes:

- Students were engaged on often complex problem-solving.
- The students generated original ideas that referenced an understanding of continuity, and geometric and organic forms.
- The designs then needed to be understood in a 3-dimensional form so students constructed models to gain spatial awareness.
- Students learned to assess their work and adjust it, when required to ensure continuity and reduce inaccuracies problem solving.
- New skills were learned - how to use unfamiliar tools while also learning carving techniques.
- Students became familiar with past projects through research and also discovered a world of art they were unfamiliar with.
- The sculptures had a profound effect on the schools aesthetics and environment this had an impact on attitudes towards the Centre generating a more positive relationship.
- Many students were so taken by the project they wanted to purchase their own hebel and continue carving while at the Centre.
- Students assisted visitors with carving.

Highlights:

- The finished installation is highly successful and changes throughout the day as light moves across the pieces from different angles.
- The work provides a valuable example of the diverse cultures, talents and interests of young people as well as having created an opportunity for the students to impact the environment they live in a highly positive context.
- Most days I hear those students who were involved in the project pointing out their sculpture to the newly enrolled students at YEC they are very proud of what they achieved.

Feedback:

'I just wish I could take it home - I might become a Stone Mason ? I had to work out how to do it and it wasn't easy, I really like what I've made - Can you take some photos of me and my sculpture to send home? - This is cool. I've always wanted to be a painter but now I'd like to do this.' Students

'The combination of having been an art teacher and also a professional artist for 20 years helped prepare me for this rather unique situation. I think I learnt and gained as much of a different experience as the students did.' Artist

'The artwork has helped to reinforce the school to both students and the community as an exciting place of learning. Those students who participated in the program are enthusiastic about furthering their carving skills...Our school has greatly benefitted from the program and I hope to continue the school's involvement with Carclew.' School Project Coordinator

60 students participated in this project