

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA AND MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD AT THE
EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, ROKEBY, WEDNESDAY 29TH MAY 2013**

HE The Emmanuel Christian School web site describes the Heart of Art Exhibition as a community art exhibition that seeks to celebrate the rich and creative gifts of Tasmanian Amateur and Professional Artists. The School rightly sees itself as part of a wider community of parents, supporters and neighbours and this exhibition is designed to service the School and its wider community. It gives local artists an opportunity to exhibit their work to that wider community and it gives that community an opportunity to see artworks it might not have seen, but for this exhibition. This community event has the support of many including the Clarence Council and local businesses and organisations whose names are listed on the back of the programme and for their support we are all grateful.

So, what impact does a visual arts programme have on a community for “[t]he arts have been heralded as a panacea for all kinds of problems.” It has been said that, “Arts-integrated school curricula supposedly improve academic performance and student discipline (Fiske 1999; Remer 1990). The arts revitalize neighbourhoods and promote economic prosperity (Costello 1998; SCDCAC 2001; Stanziola 1999; Walesh 2001). Participation in the arts improves physical and psychological well-being (Baklien 2000; Ball and Keating 2002; Bygren, Konlaan and Johansson 1996; Turner and Senior 2000). [and also that] The arts provide a catalyst for the

creation of social capital and the attainment of important community goals (Goss 2000; Matarasso 1997; Williams 1995)."¹

In an interesting enquiry into the impact of the arts on communities, Professor Joshua Guetzkow² examines three types of claims namely, that the arts build social capital, second that they improve the economy and third that the arts are good for individuals.³ With respect to exhibitions like this one, Guetzkow observes that "community arts programmes almost universally involve community members in a creative activity leading to a public performance or exhibit[ion]." And, as defined by the Ontario Arts Council, "Community Arts is an art process that involves professional artists and community members in a collaborative creative process resulting in collective experience and public expression. It provides a way for communities to express themselves; enables artists, through financial or other supports, to engage in creative activity with communities; and is collaborative – the creative process is equally important as the artistic outcome."⁴

There is a considerable body of support to which Professor Guetzkow refers in his paper, to support claims that community arts programmes such as this one do build social capital, for whether you are a viewer or an artist, a local art exhibition is likely to increase self-

¹ Joshua Guetzkow, "How the Arts Impact Communities" Taking the measure of Culture Conference", Princeton University June 7 - 8 2002

² Assistant Professor (Lecturer), Institute of Criminology & Department of Sociology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

³ Supra at page 5.

⁴ <http://www.year01.com/archive/forum/issue13/define.html> accessed 23rd May 2013.

esteem, promote a feeling of wellbeing and produce a consequential increase in the capacity to be an effective individual. Time does not permit me to examine this issue further this evening, as I know that my wife would like to say something arising out her many years of experience as the Principal of the Friends' Junior School here in Hobart, but relevant to the motivation of the Emmanuel Christian School, I would just like to leave you with a description in a 1966 report, "Coming Up Taller." As you may know, the Coming Up Taller Awards is an American programme that recognizes exemplary arts and humanities programmes which foster young people's intellectual and creative development. Programmes that are recognized by these awards provide opportunities for American youth to contribute to their communities through learning and practical experiences in the humanities and arts endeavours.⁵ Guetzkow has this to say about the Coming Up Taller report made about its 1996 programmes: "[The Report] identifies arts-training programs targeted at at-risk youth and seeks to understand why these programs work. At least two of the programs involved working with sentenced juvenile offenders. One program taught musical theatre; the other painting. Both programs appeared to enhance the self-esteem of their participants, because they learned new skills, found that they had undiscovered talents, and received positive recognition from peers and others when they performed or exhibited their work."⁶

⁵ <http://www.cominguptaller.org/coming-up-taller-awards/> accessed 23rd May 2013

⁶ Supra at page 11.

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I have to say that my 25 years' experience as a teacher supports the research to which my husband has just referred; that proper engagement with the arts can improve academic performance, and discipline, refresh and revitalise communities. A high degree of skill, knowledge, understanding and discipline is required to be able to synthesize imaginative and critical thinking, aesthetic sense, emotion and empathy to create an original work of art. These are wonderful skills to apply to all other areas of the curriculum. Further, by engaging both our intellects and our hearts, the arts cause us to explore other ways of seeing the world, to question, to wonder, to imagine and to identify sympathetically with the predicaments of others. Our inner world or spirit is nourished. I have seen this happen with vulnerable adult learners exploring major works of music for the first time; being inspired and motivated by their development of the skill and capacity to make a beautiful sound together; become the instrument of the composer and perform works by Mozart and Verdi that they didn't even know existed. I've seen mothers grow in confidence as they learn how to make music with their very young children. I've seen children become different people through engagement with the arts. My naughty boys became a choir of angels and drama productions inspired children to want to learn and brought otherwise reluctant children to school with a spring in their step and a smile on their face. And all of this of course, flows on into other areas of learning. In fact, I would go as far as to say that

education in the arts, from a very young age, by teachers qualified in those disciplines, not only enriches and nourishes the intellect, but it also nurtures the human spirit and sense of identity. It can, as master musician and music educator Kodaly said, “multiply the beauty of life⁷”.

For me, at the heart of the arts is creativity, imagination, thinking; the very faculties that make us human. Some may call it the soul, others the human spirit or others may refer to it as *that of God in each of us*. George Bernard Shaw put it this way “You use a glass mirror to see your face; you use works of art to see your soul⁸.” So for me, the arts have a deeply humanising effect on individuals and on communities that is powerfully uplifting and causes us to collaborate and communicate on a deeper, more sympathetic level. As Tagore said “we may become powerful by knowledge, but we attain fullness by sympathy⁹”

Finally, I think it is widely accepted that good schools have many resources in common. Researcher Brian Caldwell identified those resources as being firstly, high intellectual capital,(the quality of the teaching staff); secondly, high spiritual capital (the shared cultural values throughout the school community); thirdly, high economic capital and fourthly, high social capital (the strength of the school’s engagement with its own stakeholders and individuals and

⁷ Kodaly,Z *Music Should Belong To Everyone* International Kodaly Society.

⁸ AC Grayling *The Meaning of Things*(p 168) pub. Phoenix, London 2001

⁹ Nussbaum, Martha *Not for Profit* (p 95) pub. Princeton University Press USA 2010

organisations in wider community). The fifth resource is good governance that oversees and brings together the other four resources¹⁰. What you are doing here, at the *Emmanuel Christian School*, is a wonderful example of a good school at work. Art is a powerful source of both intellectual and spiritual nourishment, and a wonderful way to engage with your community while at the same time building your social capital through enrichment, encouragement and inspiration. When we were here yesterday afternoon, my husband and I were impressed with the art presented in this exhibition and thank the artists for sharing their work so generously; such a varied and diverse collection, it was hard to find a favourite. We were also impressed with the artist in residence programme running in tandem with the exhibition, and enjoyed visiting the classes with Stewart MacFarlane and Marcia Jones-Hill. What a wonderful way for your community to engage with your school.

So, we both congratulate the school on this community arts initiative and, of course, all the artists whose work is exhibited here and have much pleasure in declaring open the 2013 “Heart of Art Exhibition”.

(11 minutes)

¹⁰ Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks *Raising the Stakes* pub. Routledge USA and CANADA 2008