

High VisAbility



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

CAN acknowledges the Noongar people of the Bibbulmun nation as the traditional custodians of the land and waters on which we live and work. We pay our respect to Elders past and present and honour all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first people of this nation.

CAN is proud to work with people from all cultures, but we do so on the understanding of First Peoples, first.

Kalyakoorl Kwadja Be, Kalyakoorl Boorda Be
Always Was, Always Will Be

ARTWORK ATTRIBUTION

Several students who had their hands in these collaborative works cannot be named publicly. We wish to acknowledge their profound contribution to this project and its outcomes.

The background is an abstract composition of textures. On the left, there are vertical, brush-like strokes in shades of red and orange. The rest of the image is a darker, more mottled red with some darker, almost black, veins and textures, giving it a layered, organic feel.

You can't be
what you can't see



High VisAbility

High VisAbility is a project about possibility. Created by Community Arts Network in collaboration with Sir David Brand School, and led by Mandy White – an artist with an intellectual disability – High VisAbility is designed to enable students, teachers, families and carers to see pathways into the arts for people with disabilities.

Working alongside award-winning Yamatji artist Mandy White and her long-time collaborator, acclaimed artist Natalie Scholtz, student artists were empowered to create vibrant, playful artworks that explore identity, place and visibility.

The creation of exuberant large-scale collaborative artworks on canvas and paper was a highlight of the creative process for both the students and the lead artists.

Animator Jake Carlshausen worked with a student who makes small sculptures, teaching him how to animate those works and other students' creations, using simple apps and programs.

By showcasing the students' work, first at PICA and now at FORM Gallery, this project gives each young participant the opportunity to be seen – highly visible – as an artist.



INTRODUCTION

When CAN first visited Sir David Brand School to explore a Creativity for Schools partnership, we were instantly struck by how central art and creativity is to the students' learning experience.

The school walls are adorned in beautiful collaborative artworks, inspired by references to many famous artists.

It gave us the perfect starting point for our High VisAbility project.

Our workshops would focus on collaborative artworks, influenced by the artistic styles of co-lead artists Mandy White and Natalie Scholtz – and also some of the artists who influence them – Andy Warhol, Jean Michele Basquiat and, closer to home, Amanda Bell.

The effervescent energy that Mandy and Natty produce when they collaborate brought so much fun and frivolity to the sessions – Natalie's etherealness, elegantly intertwined with Mandy's in-your-face neon and glitter.

We didn't really know what to expect when we started. We knew a lot of the students were very engaged with art, but their enthusiasm for the workshops simply blew us away. They were magnificent, inspiring and we walked away from every session with our hearts full.

Creative Producer Tegan Jenkins – a brilliant artist herself – devised multiple ways of engaging students, ensuring all of our participating artists could be part of the art-making.

We truly believe that what we have co-created is an exhibition of exceptional, contemporary “outsider” art.

From the start, we wanted to produce something that pushed the artistic boundaries of all involved... creative statements that were bright, bold, maybe even brash. We explored new mediums and fell in love with neon acrylic.

During the High VisAbility residency, an astounding number of individual artworks were created, as well as various large-scale collaborative pieces.

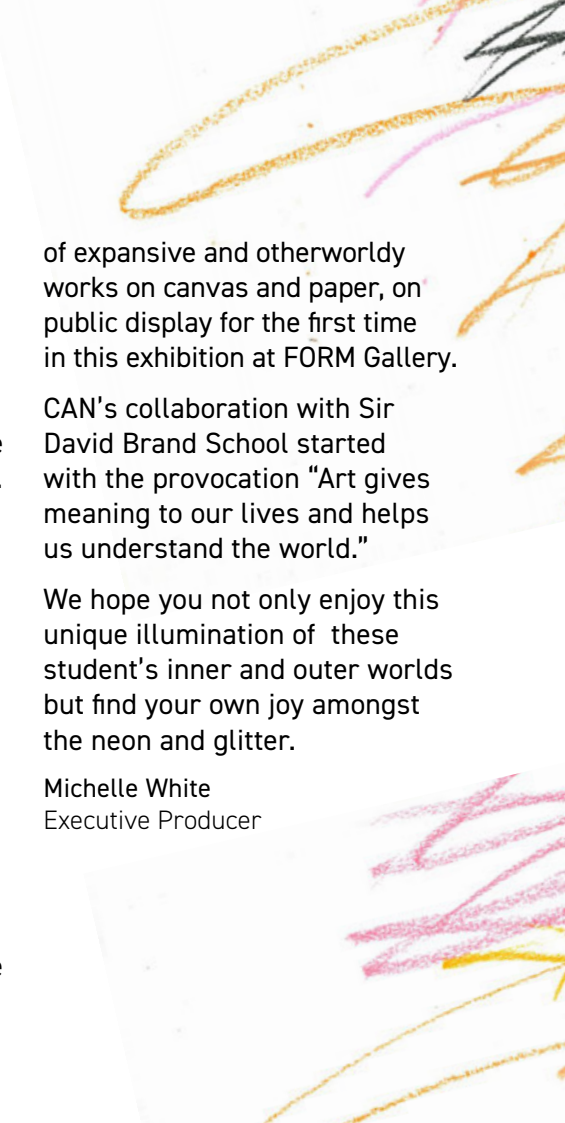
Many of these have been carefully curated within a stunning neon sculpture centrepiece, called *Many Hands - Light Work*. It sits alongside a digital display of animation, entitled *Inside Out* and a series

of expansive and otherworldly works on canvas and paper, on public display for the first time in this exhibition at FORM Gallery.

CAN's collaboration with Sir David Brand School started with the provocation “Art gives meaning to our lives and helps us understand the world.”

We hope you not only enjoy this unique illumination of these student's inner and outer worlds but find your own joy amongst the neon and glitter.

Michelle White
Executive Producer



PROJECT TEAM

COMMUNITY ARTS NETWORK

CAN is an arts producer at the forefront of community arts and cultural development (CACD), working with artists skilled in community practice to unlock Western Australia's untold stories through community participation in art. CAN's purpose is to create positive social change through the arts, building inclusion and understanding between people.

SIR DAVID BRAND SCHOOL

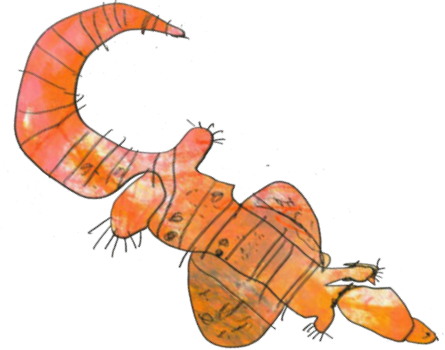
SDBS is the hub of a dynamic community, working in partnership with families and service providers to create rich, full lives for students, K-12, with a diverse range of special educational needs. This school promotes resilience and independence to ensure every child has a successful, sustainable future.

MANDY WHITE

Mandy is a passionate, award-winning Yamatji artist and a strong role model for artists with disabilities. Mandy was the lead artist in this project, mentored by Natalie Scholtz. Mandy loves to share her passion for creating art and had the opportunity to showcase her artworks at the Outsider Art Fair in New York 2024.

NATALIE SCHOLTZ

Natalie is a South African/Persian/British/Australian visual and community artist who has worked with CAN since 2009. She specialises in disability and arts as a facilitator, community artist and mentor.





IN-SCHOOL WORKSHOPS @ SDBS

The weekly in-school workshops with Mandy, Natalie and Tegan over a school term in 2024, heavily informed the design concept of the project's outcomes. The creative process has offered students opportunities to work with a variety of media, such as pencil, charcoal, ink, pastels, chalks, Posca pens, paint sticks and acrylic paint.

To explore and expand each student artist's tactile strengths and capabilities, the lead artists offered a range of options for expression, such as attaching mark-making tools to the end of long bamboo sticks to extend students' reach, and providing various mark-making tools for students to roll, stamp, smooch, scratch, spray or rub into the canvas. While the colour palette and media were provided by the artistic team, it is the students' interests and strengths that have directed the creative process.

A workshop highlight, for both student artists and professional artists, was the creation of silhouettes of the artists. In a project that is about opening up possibilities for students with disabilities, these silhouettes captured that spirit, celebrating each young person as a moving body with contours that dance on the canvas. Watching the students engage with light and shadow, the elation they found in the autonomy of not just making a line, but being a line, was palpable.





RAPHAEL

Raphael was identified as a talented artist and model-maker early on, and as a result was mentored one-on-one by artist and animator Jake Carlshausen. Together they created a collaborative animation fusing his artworks with his fellow students' artworks.

Over a four week period Raphael learnt stop-animation processes, digital drawing and drawing animation techniques using simple programs on his iPad. These skills have been documented for the school so many more students have access to this option of creative play and communication in the future.

The result of this mentoring program is an animation called *Inside Out*.

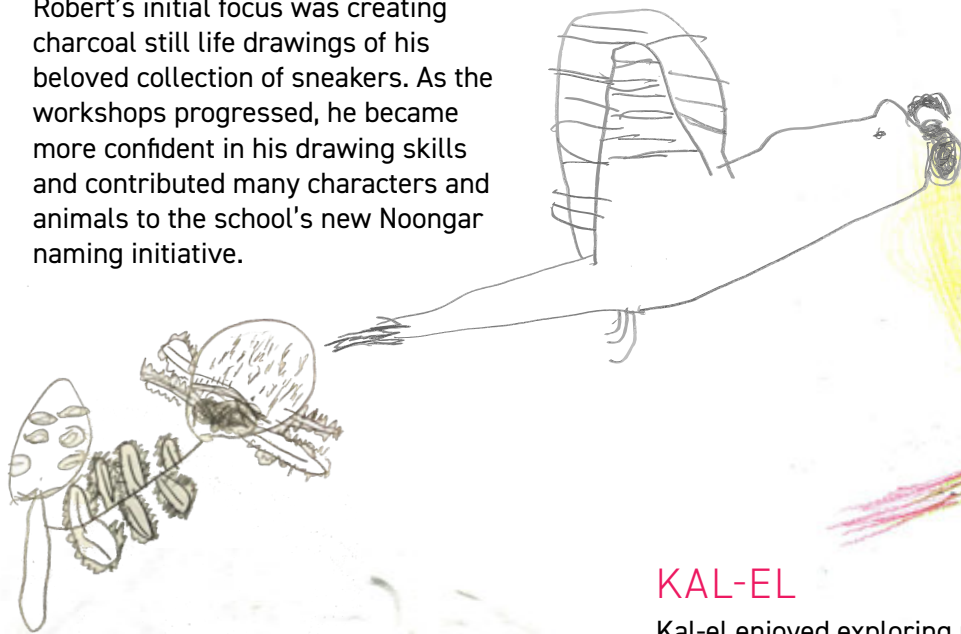


AANSH

Aansh was curious about everything but adored painting, spending long periods of time working on canvas. He delighted in painting alongside Mandy and they shared a love for pink and glitter. This work was made by both Mandy & Aansh.

ROBERT

Robert's initial focus was creating charcoal still life drawings of his beloved collection of sneakers. As the workshops progressed, he became more confident in his drawing skills and contributed many characters and animals to the school's new Noongar naming initiative.



KAL-EL

Kal-el enjoyed exploring mark-making with pastels on black paper. When not drawing, he was very content to soak up the creative atmosphere of the room.





CHAYE

Chaye incorporates art and creativity into all his learning. He's a prolific artist, jumping straight into anything and everything on offer. He was particularly inspired by the silhouette drawing and began tracing around his head onto paper before filling in his facial features. The result of this technique is just stunning. Chaye's drawings of animals will also contribute to the school's Noongar naming project.

IOANE

Ionae came prepared for the photoshoot in his wetsuit! A very sweet and theatrical boy.



TANDIN & GERALD

Tandin & Gerald are best friends and almost always work together on their artworks

Tandin, or "Pilot Tandin" as he's also known, is a confident drawer with a special talent for memorising maps, countries and geography.

Gerald was curious and participated in all the creative activities on offer, but had an absolute ball in the portrait photography session. He is obsessed with flags and is a sponge for knowledge. He also has an alias of "Roy" because he thinks Gerald is an old person's name!





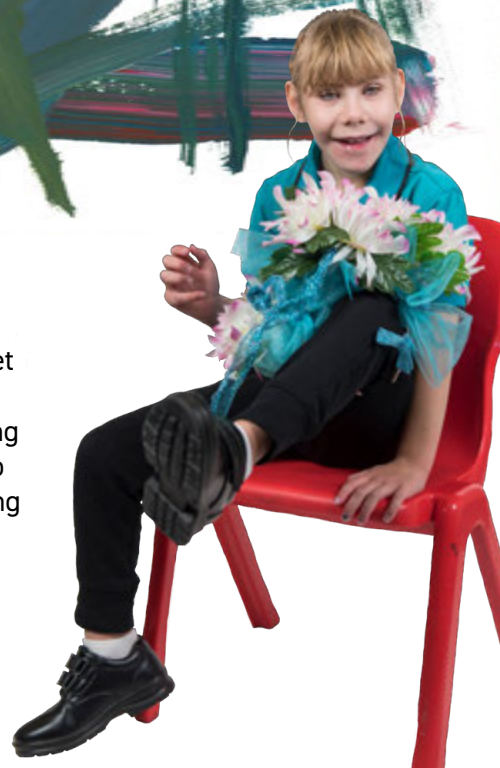
NiO

NiO loved to collaborate with other students and enjoyed sharing the canvas with Mandy, contributing strong, bold strokes of paint to the joint canvases. NiO loves painted nails and hands feature heavily in her drawings.



MARLEY

Marley is a ray of sunshine who thoroughly enjoyed exploring the wet paint area, and was won over by the silhouette drawing process, exploring light and shadows. She also loves to dress up and was absolutely beaming throughout the photo shoot session with Christophe.





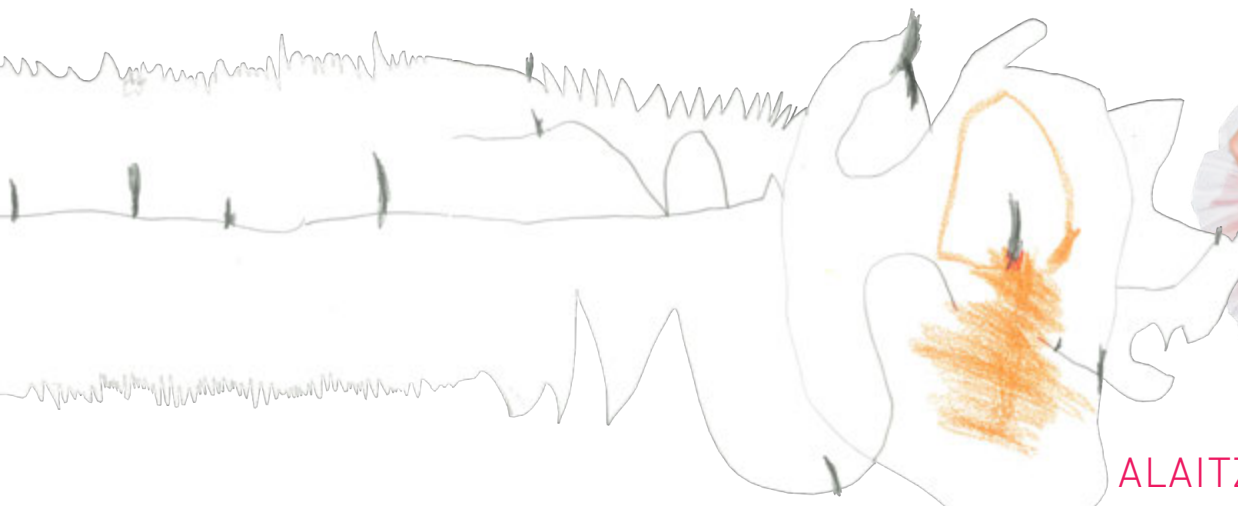
JL

JL is a fully engaged and expressive artist, using layers of contrasting colour to create emotive works. He was prolific in the workshops, exploring materials and techniques with absolute ease.



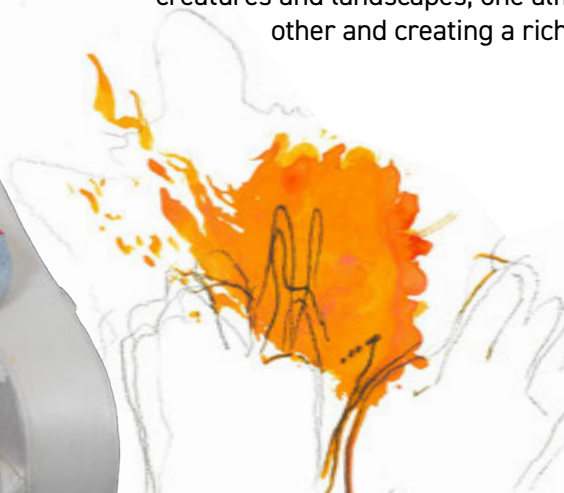
ASOKAN

Asokan appreciated the variety of creative options offered during the workshops and with gentle guidance would happily give everything a try. He created beautiful works with charcoal and fell in love with the fluoro paint sticks!



ALAITZ

Alaitz was intensely engaged in all the workshops and proved herself to be a very strong and prolific drawer. Her line work is robust and confident. Her drawings sit between creatures and landscapes, one almost emerging from the other and creating a rich story that draws us in.



ASHTON

Ashton created most of his artwork from his "race car chair" and was always smiling. He was very focused when drawing and grew in confidence working alongside facilitating artists.

NINA

Nina showed a curiosity in the silhouette drawing activity, gently smudging the outline with her movements. She also enjoyed contributing subtle marks to the collaborative works on paper.



ALIX

Alix was a ball of energy that is reflected in his artwork. When prompted, he would engage with drawing and painting, particularly enjoying working alongside Mandy.





ZACK

Zack approached the workshops slowly and tentatively, eventually experimenting with chalk. He loved getting his hands into the paint. He calmly enjoyed watching the others co-create the large scale artworks.

ARCHER

Archer is drawn to bright, bold colours which he uses with strong, confident mark-making. He is an imaginative soul who would often combine his art time with storytelling, sharing anecdotes about his family, pets and favourite machinery.



KAYLA

Kayla's bright smiling face and keenness to try everything brought a joyous energy to the creative workshops. Like many other students, she particularly liked the silhouette drawing.



BLAKE

Blake enjoyed the sound of his silhouette being etched in charcoal around him. He also liked drawing with the fluoro paint pens using gentle, repetitive marks.



RUSTY

Rusty loves to draw and enjoys drawing from references of animals and people, figurative and abstract. He enjoyed working with all mediums and was a strong and enthusiastic contributor.

PRIYA

Priya the painter! She thoroughly enjoyed collaborating with other students and the artist mentors, contributing many illustrations to the joint artworks. She would try anything offered up and did it all with gusto and a smile.



CONNOR

Connor's gentle approach to drawing produced some wonderful motifs with his repetitive style of mark on paper. He drew this stunning work on our last piece of paper for the residency!



NEVE

Neve was our colour queen. She loved working with the brightly coloured Posca pens, pastels, paints and charcoal, creating layers of luminosity on the page. She is a very focused and confident artist who loves to fill the page with every colour in the palette!



KENNEDY & JONNY

Kennedy had a very playful approach to the creative sessions and really lost himself in the dress ups during the portrait photoshoot, enamoured by the sequins and colourful wigs!



SCARLET

Scarlet was an incredibly focused artist with very deliberate and bold mark-making, loving the darkness and the smudge of the charcoal.



OLIVER

Oliver loves books and enjoyed observing the art workshops with one eye, while keeping the other firmly on *The Hungry Caterpillar*, *Bronte the Dinosaur* or *The Gruffalo*.



BAILEY

Bailey was our resident superhero artist. He is an avid drawer of action figures, and superhero characters. While confident experimenting with any medium, he loved using his markers the most. Art is his happy place.



GIOVANNI

Giovanni is kinetic, almost dancing the paintbrush to the canvas with short, sharp movements. He was interested in mixing his colours and contributed his energetic marks to the collaborative paintings.



JT

JT enjoyed experimenting with paint, pastels, water and texture. He created some beautiful flowers in his last workshop and blew everyone away!





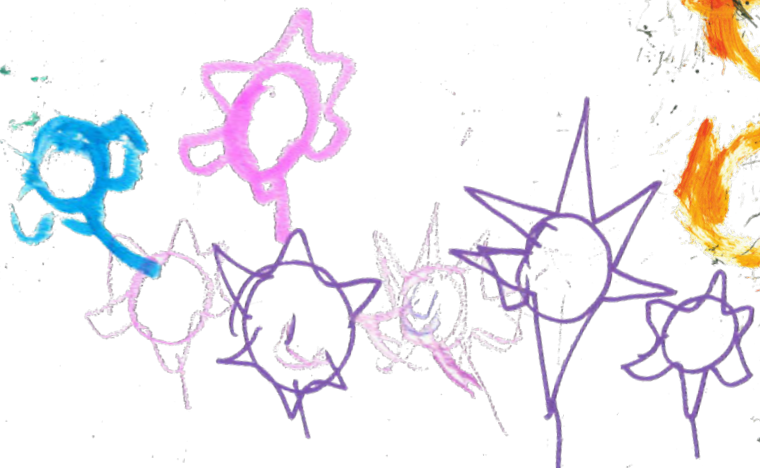
MIA

Mia was drawn to the different colours and textures she could use for each flower.



OCEAN

Ocean loved the sensation of having his hands traced around, watching the line follow his subtle movements.



NED

Ned drew and painted glorious “bubbles” in many iterations. His creative energy was equally bubbly and joyous.



DAVID

David had the best time participating in the silhouette drawings on the floor, as well as painting with the roller into the large collaborative works. He has an ethereal voice and likes to sing when he's deep in creativity. We captured his singing voice and it's featured in the *Inside Out* animation.



CHiO

ChiO explores and experiences her surroundings with her mouth, tasting the art materials before putting them to paper. She loved to lounge across the paper and seemed to become a part of the work as she made her marks. This work was a collaboration with Priya and Marley.



JAYL

JayL made his art quickly with confident marks and bold colours.

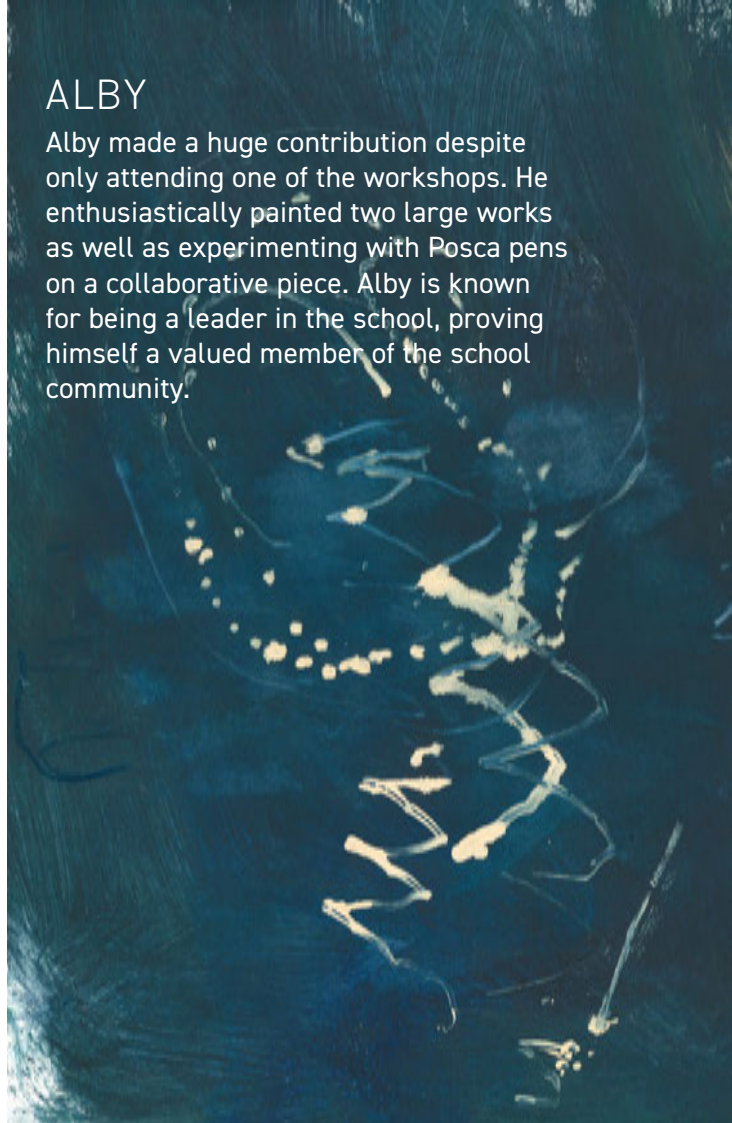


MITCHELL

Mitchell worked hard and fast, a quick deliberate drawer. He loved the photoshoot dress-up day the most, dancing around in front of the camera.

ALBY

Alby made a huge contribution despite only attending one of the workshops. He enthusiastically painted two large works as well as experimenting with Posca pens on a collaborative piece. Alby is known for being a leader in the school, proving himself a valued member of the school community.



COLLABS

These large-scale artworks on canvas and paper hold over 40 artists' marks over a period of as many hours. They are a record of our time together, of their creative process and their exploration.

Some artists used the collaborative work as a break from their already focused art practice, while for others, these works provided the most accessible platform to experiment, push, paint over, and dance in a visual conversation with each other. With an abundance of choice, over the medium, movement and sensory engagement, the collabs allowed artists to approach artmaking at their own speed, whether they quietly observed, wound up covered head to toe in paint, or anywhere in between.

The true power of these collaborations lies in their ability to shift focus from the final outcome to a pedagogy rooted in play, interaction and the creative process itself. This approach embraces inclusivity and collective expression over perfection, it celebrates the unexpected, and the results can be magical.

















REFLECTIONS ON HIGH VISABILITY

by Western Australian artist, freelance writer and curator Andrew Nicholls

Unlike conventional pigments that have been employed by humans for artistic expression for millennia, fluorescent colours are a relatively recent invention, first observed by Western science in the 16th Century and not named until the 19th. Their luminosity derives from utilising a broader range of both visible and invisible light than other colours: whereas conventional hues reflect up to 90% of the light spectrum, fluorescents can reflect up to 300%. In other words, they work harder than other colours to draw our attention.

The eye-catching impact of fluorescent colour is frequently employed by Mandy White, a self-identified “outsider” artist who nonetheless habitually crosses into the mainstream of

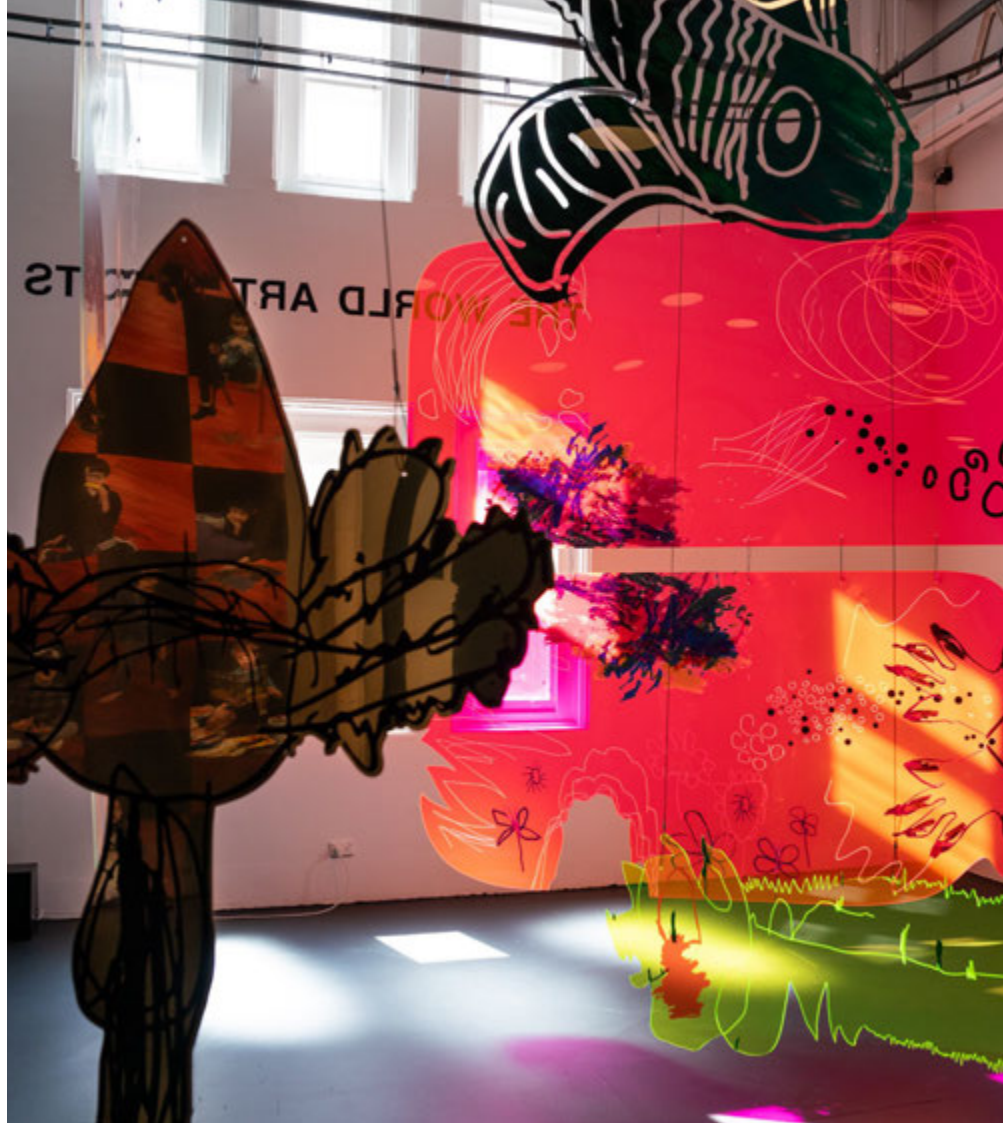
the contemporary art world. White is beloved by audiences for her vibrant and playful paintings, sculptures and works on paper, which frequently utilise attention-grabbing fluorescents and glitter. Sometimes drawing on her Yamatji heritage, White’s works express an animistic world view, depicting a diverse range of often humorous and occasionally-sinister animals and spirit beings on highly gestural backgrounds. Her deft eye for colour and composition, skilled linework and sharp wit see her regularly shortlisted for (and winning) major awards and curated into important exhibitions and art fairs in Western Australia and internationally.

Alongside her highly accomplished art practice White is a skilled

facilitator and a role model to other artists living with disability, and the *High VisAbility* project has allowed her to inspire and collaborate with a diverse cohort of around 50 differently-abled young people from Sir David Brand School over several months during 2024. Devised by Community Arts Network as a partnership with the School and Awesome Arts, the project was a group effort, delivered by a formidable team, but stridently led by White (supported by co-lead artist Natalie Scholtz), with key aesthetic decisions inspired by her sensibility, and a flexible and responsive structure driven by her insistence that the students’ artistic vision always remain central. The project title alludes to White’s trademark

love of fluoro colours, but is also a call to action, in amplifying the creativity of people who are frequently relegated to the sidelines of culture.

High VisAbility has particularly done this by focusing on ambitious works of scale capable of providing the participating students (and audiences alike) with immersive experiences. Three of these were launched at the first showcasing of project outcomes at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts in late 2024. This included a hanging installation translating drawings by White and the students into heroic scale, which exploits the translucency and neon-like qualities of fluorescent Perspex to create a space for playful exploration. This work





was complemented by enormous, printed banners showcasing portraits created collaboratively by the students and guest mentor, photographer Christophe Canato. Multiple drawings by various participants were also expertly animated by student Raphael with mentorship from animator Jake Carlshausen, reinforcing the collaborative approach that has marked the project: throughout the development of *High VisAbility*, outcomes have been freely shared, reworked and reinterpreted by different members of the cohort, indicating the level of trust cultivated by White and her team.

The second exhibition of project outcomes at FORM Gallery has furthered this collective approach via a group assemblage by White

and several established “outsider” artists in her network, an initiative designed to highlight the career paths that exist, should the students wish to continue their artmaking into adulthood. Alongside solo works by several students and collaborative interpretations of local flora and fauna inspired by Noongar Elder Geri Hayden, the exhibition at FORM Gallery additionally showcases a spectacular series of large-scale works on paper. These highly-sophisticated collaborative compositions exist in stark contrast to the whimsical aesthetic one might expect from student artists. Though White’s trademark fluoro oranges and pinks are present, the series overall has an almost sombre, distinctively corporeal

messiness. It comprises mark-making from every project participant (including those with extremely limited mobility), built up through months of layering with hands, feet and tools, with White responsible for resolving each composition in her studio, moulding them into a strikingly cohesive and resonant body of works.

High VisAbility was conceived for and by creatives with differing levels of ability, and it has more than delivered on its ambition to place marginalised voices at the centre of artistic discourse. The resulting works are particularly inspiring in the context of an art world where conversations are increasingly taking place (though not enough of them, and not yet loudly enough) regarding the



industry's able-centric nature and the lack of safety for marginalised artists, art workers and audiences (be that based on ability, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexuality or any combination of these) in a sector that loudly claims to be progressive and inclusive, while frequently providing only the barest-minimum requirements for participation. The sophistication of the *High VisAbility* works and their scale of ambition evidences the richness that can be achieved by making the effort to build accessibility into all levels of a project from the outset, while their collaborative nature shatters the Modernist cliché of the artist as solitary hero, in favour of an egalitarian sharing of the spotlight, and a spirit of playful generosity.

In White's home State of Western Australia, "hi-vis" is synonymous with the mining industry and other forms of manual labour in which attention-grabbing colour contributes to safe work practice. While this association is unavoidable in a culture so dominated by the economic and environmental impact of the resources industry, it makes for a surprisingly appropriate point of reference, evoking several themes that are central to the *High VisAbility* project: the fallibility of the body (hi-vis is primarily designed to keep people physically safe) in the context of a project focused on differing levels of ability; protection, with the entire project designed to ensure a safe space; group endeavour (seldom will someone in high-vis be working

alone), reflecting the project's "safety in numbers" approach; and most importantly, the notion of hard work, which in this case has resulted in creative outcomes of impressive sophistication and scale. Like fluorescents which work harder than other colours to draw the eye, White and her collaborators have laboured tirelessly to create a body of work that is impossible to overlook.



READ FULL ESSAY



THANK YOU

Thank you to all the wonderful teachers, staff, students, parents and caregivers at Sir David Brand School for inviting us into your school community and entrusting us with the artistic licence to create these collaborative artworks.

Thank you to the creative team for the heart, soul, creativity and passion you have dedicated to the High VisAbility workshops and exhibition - what a wonderful, colourful and ultimately fulfilling ride it has been!

PROJECT TEAM

Lead artist **Mandy White**
Executive producer (CAN) **Michelle White**
Creative producer/Co-lead artist (CAN) **Natalie Scholtz**
Producer (CAN) **Tegan Jenkins**
Digital & graphic design (CAN) **Rebecca Lyon Augustus**
Cultural advisor (CAN) **Geri Hayden**
Photographer **Christophe Canato**
Animator **Jake Carlshausen**

STUDENT ARTISTS

Robert, Raphael, Chaye, NiO, Marley, ChiO, ZC, David, KN, JT, Aansh, Zack, Giovanni, Ioane, Oliver, Georgia, JL, Alix, Alaitz, Gerald, Kal-el, Tandin, Nina, Jonny, Kennedy, Tyler, Ashton, Ocean, Bailey, Mia, Archer, Kayla, Asokan, Blake, Mitchell, Connor, Priya, Scarlet, Neve, Ned, Alby, Rusty, JayL ...and many more artists who remain anonymous.

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Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries



