

Wanganui Park Secondary College

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This project involved making 3 very large, painted interpretations of aerial views of the whole Shepparton area. These were made on separate canvases of 4 X 2 meters. Two classes of Year 9's, each of about 24 students, worked on the project. The interpretations of Shepparton were intended to be 'Impressionist paintings' of the character of the area rather than be absolutely accurate (if that was wanted a photograph or map could be used).

In addition to the 3 canvases, the students were introduced to the works of the Heidelberg School artists, especially their 9" X 5" works on wooden panels. This provided an opportunity to introduce an integrated Studio and History component to the program. Each student made their individual colourful interpretation of the area around their own homes in a 9" X 5" format. These were placed behind matt boards cut by a

professional picture framer. While some students made highly realistic interpretations, others made strongly patterned interpretations. Both were interesting and imaginative and of an extremely high quality, and together they provided an exciting interpretation of Shepparton. The works produced for the 9" X 5" task can be viewed in the other Wanganui Park Secondary College file found on the [Artist in Residences](#) site.

With the 'big paintings' one class made an interpretation of the city and countryside in Summertime (yellows, oranges, yellow ochre and warm reds and pinks) while the other class made an interpretation of the city and countryside in Wintertime (greens, blues, turquoise and purple). We decided from the start not to use black in any of the big paintings so that the colours would remain clean and bright. This was successful and turned out to be a wise decision. These two paintings were intentionally not identical in size or details shown. The third canvas (painted by myself) showed a night view of Shepparton with hundreds of tiny yellow, orange and red dots representing night lights against a dark blue/purple background. A night flight was taken to record images of the Shepparton and Mooroopna area and many photographs were recorded by Year 12 student Simon Bingham and myself.

The project was launched and formally displayed on stage at the school's Speech and Awards Night (16th December) with the 3 large canvases hung on stage as a backdrop to the evening's proceedings. The 9" X 5" works were displayed in the foyer outside the auditorium. The 'big paintings' will be located on the walls of the Visy Centre (the school auditorium) with the series of 9" X 5" interpretations mounted below.

The project had the support of Cavalier Art Supplies (which donated the canvas and some of the paints), the Local Council (which provided survey maps of the municipal area), and was covered on WIN Television News and in the local newspaper. Zart included it in its first edition of *Zart Extra* in 2010.

It is hoped the project can become an on-going yearly event for Year 9 students at the school. Art teachers Tina Gartlan (who allowed me to work

with her students) and Narelle Baker (who made it possible within the school) ensured the successful undertaking and completion of this enormous project.

The idea of aerial views of various places, both rural and urban, could be used for students of any age group. *Close up and far away* is an interesting theme for a class to explore. The works of artists such as Dacre Smythe, Tim Storrier and John Olsen, for example, could be used for inspiration and to link the studio works to culture and the processes of research and investigation. Large works also provide opportunities for students to work together on common projects with all of the educational outcomes that such experiences provide.

If you'd like to do a joint venture on such a theme with another school, here or overseas, I can put you in touch with one and a joint online exchange of work or exhibition and could be managed.