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Contact us

Editor
Jacob Smith
editor@threegeneration.org

Advertising
Jacob Smith
editor@threegeneration.org

Prem School
www.ptis.ac.th
facebook.com/PTISschool

Admissions
roxanneh@ptis.ac.th

Traidhos
www.threegeneration.org
vsp.threegeneration.org
barge.threegeneration.org

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Editorial

The world is shaped by our ability to create and innovate. Over thousands of years civilisation has steadily advanced through human ingenuity. Almost everything we use today (and take for granted) required an inventor with creative genius.

But what is creativity? Instinctively, some of us say that we are ‘not creative’; however, this is simply false. All humans are creative by design, though we may not all be artistic. Children demonstrate this best. Their imagination is boundless and they experiment constantly with new concepts. They are not yet limited by preconceptions. We must nurture and develop our creative instincts. Innovation is the most valuable currency of our age and so cultivating creative minds should be amongst the most important goals of any society. It is an invaluable, future-proof skill.

As we grow older, however, constraints can appear and a child can learn that it is wrong to have an imagination that is too active. This is an unfortunate by-product of a complex world that necessitates standardisation. It takes bravery to ditch rote learning and concentrate on cultivating creativity. Yet, pushing the boundaries is how innovation occurs.

Throughout our teaching at Traidhos and Prem, encouraging the latent creative forces within our students remains a primary focus. We want our students to develop with open minds and an unmatched versatility. They will then be ready for anything their futures may bring.

I hope you enjoy the contributions by our creative community in this magazine.

Editor
Jacob Smith
Einstein famously described creativity as ‘imagination having fun’ and the educational advisor Sir Ken Robinson presents it as a skill, that is as important in education as literacy. But what is it that we actually mean when we talk about ‘creativity’ in education and how important is it to give over time in schools, to engagement that focuses on ‘education for creativity’?

Several years ago, I was asked to lead the UK national campaign for the arts development agency ARTSWORK. Founded and chaired by Sir Ken himself, the purpose and vision of ARTSWORK is to make the arts more accessible to young people and to raise awareness of how and why creative engagement is an essential component of both formal and informal education. The primary purpose of this particular campaign was to communicate the importance of creativity and engagement with the arts for young people, and to do so outside of the art, education and cultural sectors. This was to be a national campaign that would, among other things, take the message and philosophy of arts engagement into the health service, police service and directly develop British government policy, regarding creative engagement for young people.

Much of this process involved talking to leaders in schools, cultural organisations, justice departments, and local and national government. One of the most interesting things born out of the process of campaigning, was seeing the disparity of understanding in terms of what ‘creativity’ means in the context of education. On the simplest level, some argued that of ‘arts for art’s sake’, that there should be more engagement with music, dance, drama and art and that we should give these subjects equal, or greater value than that of science, technology, mathematics etc. Understanding the powerful learning that can take place when you use the arts as a lens to explore and investigate more traditional, academic, or using the approach of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, ARTS, mathematics), is a methodology that many educational leaders advocated for, as is the need to find ways to embed the arts into the cultural foundation of schools.

Differing approaches to recognising its importance and prioritising it’s nurturing aside, it’s clear that schools striving to operate models of best practice are aware of the importance of fostering creativity among their students. Some operate with policies in place, so as to ensure that there are opportunities for creative engagement across the curriculum, others use the arts as their prime vehicle for delivering interdisciplinary models of education. Here at Prem we do all of these things and we go one step further, via Artist Residency Thailand, our developmental, creative programme which ensures that our school is an international hub for leading artists and creative practitioners.

You will see via the contributing articles from our staff and students in this edition, that creativity isn’t just an add-on or afterthought at Prem, but exists at the foundation of who we aspire to be as a school.

Alex Soulsby is an International Arts and Creative Education Manager and Consultant with over nineteen years’ experience of Education, Creative Projects Management and Artist Mentoring. He is the founding director of Artist Residency Thailand.

Photos: Alex Soulsby
Art Crescent makeover by Ellie Balk and the Prem students
Public Art as a Tool for Nature Conservation

Haaniah Akhtar argues for the power public art has in reconnecting our society with nature.

Art encompasses many aspects of creative activity, such as painting, music, literature and dance. The impact it has on people is profound, as it has the ability to trigger emotional responses. It is for this reason why throughout history, art has been used to push various political, religious and social agendas.

In the past, the study and enjoyment of art was reserved for the wealthy and the educated. Displays of art have moved from being exclusively in galleries, to areas which are more accessible to the public. With the recent surge of art accessible on the internet, artworks can cross national boundaries and reach new audiences.

At the same time, different expressions of art, whether they are time based, interactive, digital, or ephemeral, have made their mark in the artistic world. As the art scene is moving from elite, to something that is every day and inclusive for all, we are seeing more ‘public art’. Art that is physically in the public space, has the ability to enhance our social experiences, beautifying our surroundings and fostering a sense of community. We should recognise the potential that public art has in improving our nature and society. Its ability to ignite an appreciation for vulnerable and neglected environments, makes public art the perfect tool for environmental conservation.

Art has been a means by which humans have expressed their control over, awe of, fear of and isolation from nature. Portrayals of nature are never accurate reflections of reality. Every rendering of the natural world is a construction, in which nature is translated through the filter of our own interests. As our relationship with nature has evolved, so have our portrayals of it.

We can see this throughout the romantic era, particularly in Caspar David Friedrich’s Wanderer above the Sea of Fog (1818). The painting captures the strong intervention of nature and the interest to conquer the world. Here, nature can be viewed as a communal resource. Man’s dominance over nature is clearly implied, suggesting our mastery of nature. Nevertheless, nature is seen as something that should be tamed, perhaps because it was viewed as a threat.

The general portrayal of nature shifted in the latter part of the romantic era. It was depicted as a completely separate realm, detached from civilisation. Depictions of our landscapes were expressions of national pride. For example, painters like John Atkinson Grimshaw and John Constable were drawn to the Lake District’s dramatic scenery and depicted it as an untouched sublime. This helped increase the Lake District’s notoriety and activated conservation efforts to preserve the beauty of the English countryside. The desire to keep nature unspoilt by man led to the Lake District becoming a UNESCO world heritage site.

Paintings during the post-idyllic landscape era, however, no longer captured a devotion to nature, but instead expressed a concern for the fate of our environment. Environmental catastrophe was shown to be a result of human irresponsibility and a mistreatment of nature. Many paintings depicted a chaotic wilderness and presented nature as a destructive force, resulting in desolation. In John Martin’s The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (1852), there are strong motifs of vengeance and rage. A clear message in this painting, is that humanity’s earthly paradise has been ruined and stripped of its bounty.

This painting is clear in its attribution of blame: human negligence. But whether these kinds of depictions of nature are effective in inspiring environmental activism, should be considered. Studies show that fear-based appeals do not work in engaging people and changing behaviours. Sarah O’Neill’s 2009 study showed that images of human suffering made people feel powerless and apathetic towards environmental destruction. An alternative, hopeful framing of climate change was instead proposed, as this could empower people to become ‘climate change active’.

Art has been a means by which humans have expressed their control over, awe of, fear of and isolation from nature. Portrayals of nature are never accurate reflections of reality. Every rendering of the natural world is a construction, in which nature is translated through the filter of our own interests. As our relationship with nature has evolved, so have our portrayals of it.
Indeed, artworks that display our communion with nature are beginning to appear in public spaces. Bond Street’s London Underground station houses Orsted UK’s brilliant adaptation of Friedrich’s original. Placing the poster underground, in a space that is so detached from the natural world, only reinforces Orsted’s message to millions of commuting Londoners - that humans and nature are intrinsically connected. As part of a nationwide campaign to promote sustainable technologies, Orsted incorporated a sea of wind turbines in to the painting’s backdrop. This presents human ingenuity as integral to the natural landscape and implies that technology and nature can coexist. As Friedrich’s painting epitomises the Romantic era fascination with feelings of awe, the campaign presents the turbines as objects of wonder and a result of Britain’s engineering excellence. The painting hopes to inspire individuals to realise the UK’s potential mastery of sustainable energy.

A study by Maria Sakelleri in 2015 found that a hopeful framing of nature is highly effective in helping people to envision a more sustainable future. Many cities around the world are taking advantage of this approach by using outdoor art installations to enhance urban aesthetic experiences and motivate environmental activism. These artworks aim to both improve our outdoor environments as well as our relationship with nature.

UK charity Sustrans has integrated this thinking into their National Cycle Network. The Network has a collection of public artwork on display. Sustrans works with artists to create environments that celebrate the surrounding area, helping to create a strong sense of local pride. This effectively allows people to reclaim public space and encourages them to take a more active role in their environment.

Children can also benefit from engaging with their environment through creating art. As various recent reports have highlighted, children are growing up detached from the natural world and lacking unstructured free play in the outdoors. The growing number of children with ‘nature-deficit disorder’ means that it is crucial that we employ more outdoor experiential learning in our education systems. Projects that focus on sensory awareness are a good start. Artist Christian Nold has included students in activities that are designed to heighten their sensory experiences and has used GPS units to ‘tag’ important experiences on their way to school. Nold then developed Sensory Maps, incorporating the pupils’ feelings, observations and drawings about their local area.

Simple activities like an art scavenger hunt have the potential to connect children with their local habitat areas. At Traidhos, campers are taught that nature provides us with countless useful materials. The students use materials they have collected outside, to create artwork inspired by Andy Goldsworthy. The activity helps children realise that outdoor environments are places to be loved. It also enables children to feel empowered and take ownership of their outdoor spaces, while allowing them to develop their own appreciation for the natural world.

How we frame our landscapes and environments is indicative of whether they are conserved or neglected. Portrayals of nature in art also play an instrumental role in how we view our relationship with the natural world and envision our future. Art is rediscovering a sense of purpose. The surge in outdoor art installations has meant that art can infiltrate our everyday lives and is not just limited to gallery spaces. Banksy’s recent shredding of Girl with Balloon at Sothebys, highlights a growing desire to democratise art and make it accessible to all. Studies are increasingly advocating the benefits that outdoor art has to our mental health. In places where art has been moved outside, people have claimed to feel more engaged with their landscapes. Outdoor art is about bringing people together and creating a strong sense of community in areas that may be abandoned or neglected. Thus, public art can effectively lead to the conservation of our local environments and nature.

Haaniah Akhtar has designed art work for Green ID Hanoi. This is used in workshops to inspire children to be more climate change active. She is currently an Education Facilitator at Traidhos Camp Program.

Photos: WikimediaCommons, WikiArt and Firedog Creative
Anukar. It was a village that not many knew of, but legends that told of the village were passed down the generations. Being close to the sea, it was a fisherman’s village.

The most famous legend known among the fishermen warned:

“Do not be deceived. These creatures look majestic, yet they only represent misfortune. They are the nourishment of the Sea Gods. Upon meeting these beautiful souls, you shall meet the full wrath of the Sea Gods. It is impossible to win against the angered Gods.”

These words were inscribed on the stones at the entrance to the port and were passed by every single fisherman departing to sea.

For a fisherman, having bad fortune puts you at a great disadvantage. Having bad fortune makes it hard to catch any fish. Even if a fish was caught by someone with bad fortune, it will only ever be a fish that will not fetch a high price at market. Although, this does not matter to the fishermen of Anukar. They are blessed with luck by the Sea Gods, but in return, the village has to make a sacrifice. The luck of a random newborn of Anukar will be taken away by the Sea Gods for as long as that individual resides in the village. In return, every other resident receives the Sea God’s blessings. If the cursed individual leaves the village for more than a month, the blessings will disappear until the next sacrifice is born. The unfortunate sacrifice is therefore forbidden to leave the village, except to sail into the sea as a fisherman.

The chosen individual at this time was a man now in his late twenties, Mattuy. Bird poo seemed drawn to his head, the wooden planks at the port broke beneath his feet, and his catch was always poor. If he somehow managed to catch a fish, a larger one would jump out of the water to steal his catch. These occurrences were normal to him: it...
was just part of his daily life. He had never met anyone more unfortunate than himself. Yet, despite his bad luck, Mattuy was still a game fisherman, determined to run his family’s business.

Mattuy had no family living with him. His parents had passed away and his sister was pursuing her dreams in the city. Mattuy’s bad luck meant he couldn’t make a living on his own and was only able to survive through the support of his sister.

Mattuy’s luck was infamous in the village and because of that, no one dared to befriend him. Everyone believed his misfortune would fall upon them if they became involved with him.

Today was just like any other day for Mattuy. Before heading out, he watched The Daily Fortune on his old television: today was apparently an especially bad day for him. Even so, he would still head out to fish, believing that it shouldn’t matter, since even when his fortune was ‘good’, it seemed to do him no good. “Today will be just like any other day”, he thought.

Everyone at the port wondered why Mattuy continued fishing. The answer was a selfish one: he just wanted to prove that even with bad luck, he could still be as successful as any other fishermen in the village.

After sailing out to sea, he began fishing and as usual he waited for hours and fell asleep still gripping his rod. Suddenly, he felt a strong pulling which woke him. Feeling the strong sensation of the pull, he was sure it would be a big fish. “My first big catch”, he thought. He kept reeling and pulling the fish towards the boat and in response the fish struggled intensely. Just when he had almost successfully pulled the fish towards his motorboat, the fish jumped out of the water, high into the air. He couldn’t believe what was in front of his eyes. The bright silvery-pink scales covering its whole body shone in the sunlight. The faint colors of the rainbow sparkled on its scales. Mattuy was completely overwhelmed by its appearance. He subconsciously loosened his grip on the rod, letting the fish pull it out of his hands. The fish fell back into the ocean and swam away dragging the rod with it. Not only did Mattuy lose his first big catch but he also lost his only fishing rod.

Without a rod he had no choice but to head back to the village. At this very moment storm clouds appeared, covering the sky. He tried to start the motor but it appeared to be dead. The Daily Fortune might actually have been accurate for once. Waves far larger than his boat were forming on all sides. Mattuy took out his toolkit and desperately began fixing the motor. Lightning suddenly began striking the sea around him. All he could do was to concentrate on fixing the motor and just hope that the lighting didn’t strike him directly.

It seemed to take an eternity but eventually the engine started. The boat began moving forward, only for another disaster to strike. “How long has it been since I was this unlucky?” Mattuy cried out. A big waterspout was pulling the boat back. Using his last resort, Mattuy tried to row the boat forward with the oars, but it was no use. The lighting was edging ever closer. He knew it would mean suicide to remain on the boat. He jumped off and in that instant a huge bolt crashed down on the boat, breaking it to pieces.

As Mattuy tried to stay afloat, the current pulled him into the waterspout with an unfightable force. His strength was soon completely depleted. He thought he was going to die, until a light appeared, coming ever closer towards him. The light was from a school of beautiful fish, the same kind he had almost caught earlier. He grabbed the fins of one as they passed, holding as tightly as his failing consciousness allowed, until finally, he fainted.

Mattuy opened his eyes on an unknown beach. He recalled what had happened and realised that he was in a situation right out of a movie: shipwrecked and alone on an island. He hadn’t eaten since leaving the village so he found some materials and made a makeshift fishing rod. He placed the rod in the water, of course not expecting to catch anything, when he felt an immediate pull. He reeled and struggled and finally caught his first big catch. It was the same type of fish he had met earlier. He prepared the fish and was overjoyed upon first bite. It melted in his mouth. The meat had a rich, fatty taste, with a smooth texture. He could taste its sweetness through his entire mouth. Mattuy could barely believe that a taste like this existed.

Over the next few days he kept catching the same fish again and again. It seemed impossible not to catch one. His luck had apparently become so bad that he’d broken through and stumbled into incredible good fortune. Mattuy had endured the worst and come through the other side. His reward was a fisherman’s dream catch.

After a few days Mattuy began making a new boat from materials he found on the island. He caught as many fish as the boat could hold and sailed back to Anukar. Upon reaching the village, he went straight to the buyer and presented his catch. The buyer suspiciously tasted the unknown fish. His expression became one of shock and he suddenly screamed out. The taste was so intense that he began crying. There followed a huge ruckus in the village. No one could believe Mattuy could have caught such an incredible fish.

Mattuy’s perseverance had broken the curse of the Sea Gods. He went on to earn a huge fortune from fishing. Eventually, he decided to leave the village and travel the world, a luxury previously unthinkable for him. He was finally free. The blessings of fortune from the Sea Gods continued for Anukar’s fishermen, despite Mattuy’s absence. From then on, Mattuy was known as “The Fortunate Fisherman of Anukar”.

Kornkrit Aim Rangsiyothai is a International Baccalaureate Careers Program (IBCP) student at Prem. He hopes to have a career in writing in the future.

‘Fish of Fortune’ - Watercolour by Haaniah Akhtar
I believe that we are all inherently creative beings. That said, I think it’s important that we ensure students engage in creative experiences in their school years so that by activating their imaginations and initiatives, they see themselves as creative people. Through the act of doing, we become. As a music teacher, I hope that through their experiences, my students’ musical identities will eventually encompass a range of intertwined selves: performer, composer, connoisseur.

How creativity impacts community is simple: by empowering individuals to think creatively and critically, we invigorate our communities. Music can be combined with other arts or forms of expression to communicate an ‘extra-musical’ message. Alternatively, creativity in music can solely encompass the expressive and technical aspects of music, which in itself is an extremely valuable process. I would like to share some examples from our classes to provide a context for these ideas.

Change can happen when we look at ourselves. For example, last year in a unit called Videorama, Grade 8 students were tasked to put together a five-minute video of their musical experiences and were encouraged to go beyond the scope of the class to explore their musical identities on a broader scale. Students were given free rein to choose the experiences they would create and/or highlight, as well to choose which technologies to incorporate in order to convey their vision through this mixed media project. The range of final projects was vast and, in some cases, students not only surprised us as the audience, but they themselves as the creators. Creativity often involves an inner journey; constructing identity is a powerful tool to how we see ourselves.

An example of musical creativity in which the focus was more on gaining creative experiences in a music-specific context is taking place in our Grade 9 & 10 Instrumental Music class. Students are currently working on a jazz composition using an online software program called Noteflight. Despite some aspects of the assignment that are fairly prescriptive (i.e. showing an understanding of basic jazz chords and form), students have a lot of freedom in choosing instrumentation, key and the level of difficulty. In addition to composing and notating their pieces, students also explore creativity through a live improvisation over their ‘B’ section on their main instrument. As a result of these experiences of ‘doing’, students ‘become’ performers, improvisers, composers.

In contrast, the Grade 9 & 10 Vocal Music is presently focused more on the outer world. Our current unit is guided by the statement of inquiry: ‘Art can initiate change depending on the narrative and message communicated to and received by the audience.’ Students actually start the unit by stepping away from music to take a look at the issues in the world that bother them; that they want to change. From their own initial list of brainstormed issues, students must choose one guiding problem, which will become the basis for their lyrics. As budding singer-songwriters, they must come up with their own melody and chords, and they have the option to add a drum beat, bass line and counter-melody. Finally, these young vocalists need to accompany themselves on the piano or guitar. It is up to students themselves as to how far they want to initiate change. In some cases, the change is an internal one; in other cases, students feel the need to perform more publicly and/or to find new ways to get their message out to a broader audience.

In sum, we strengthen our community by questioning it and ourselves, and by celebrating the creativity that is within each of us. When students think creatively, think compassionately, reflect on who they are—and then present this to others—this can lead to change. For some teenagers—in fact for people at any age, the first step often has to be a personal one in which their creativity is not shared but rather internalized. In an age of intense consumerism, teaching students that they can create music for themselves versus only consuming it is essential.

Dr. Gina Ryan describes the drive to teach deeper lessons through music classes at Prem.

Dr. Gina Ryan is the Senior School music teacher and has been at Prem since 2011. She teaches strings, band, vocal & choral, music appreciation, composition and technology and is one of the founders of the International Schools of Chiang Mai Concert Band Music Festival, as well as the director of the Prem Symphonic Band. Gina received her Ph.D in music education from McGill University. As a passionate advocate for new music, Gina has commissioned, composed and performed music for stages around the world.

Photo: Gina Ryan
A few months ago, I read a news article about two Koreans who went missing during a trip to China. Unfortunately, they were later found without any organs, including their eyes. Organ trafficking occurs frequently, even in Korea. I wondered why this is occurring even though hospitals have legally donated organs, and how the customers contact the broker without getting caught by the police.

I researched from two points of view: the customer and broker. According to news blog Big Think, the majority of customers are on a waiting list for an organ transplant already, but do not have time to wait their turn. They therefore decide to illegally buy an organ, even if the cost is a few hundred thousand dollars.

Big Think says the broker kills without fear or guilt and is only interested in the money. The price of the organs is expensive and so worth the risk. According to Gizmodo, a pair of eyeballs can be purchased for $1,525, a heart for $119,000, a liver for $157,000 and a kidney for $262,000. According to Insight, customers contact the broker in a unique fashion. In public toilets in Korea, there is a secret message for prospective customers: a poster with the word ‘Helicopter’ and a contact number. ‘Helicopter’ stands for HEart, LIver, CORnea, Pancreas, TEndon and Retina.

From my research, I found that organ trafficking is all about the money. I therefore made an artwork that expressed this unnatural commercialisation of the human being. The barcode is being forced upon the woman, who is drawn on a different, glass medium. A human body is not there for someone else to profit from. Her tears represent a weeping for the state of humanity.
Creativity in Learning on the Barge Program

Traidhos Barge Program teaches environmental education around the country. Rhianne de Brouwer details the creative stops on the Barge’s tour of Thailand.

Creativity in learning has been highlighted as a skill that is essential for success in the twenty-first century. It allows children to develop executive brain functions which they will need to accomplish goals in our complex, interconnected and ever changing world. At Traidhos Barge Program, our vision is to educate and connect individuals and communities, to raise environmental awareness and to take responsibility for a globally sustainable future. This article explores how the creative activities we use in our program allow us to work towards this vision.

From pottery making on Ko Kret, to weaving in Sukhothai, to tie dying on Baan Krachao, making traditional crafts is often a favourite part of the trip. It is fun, the children get to take something home with them and they get to express their creativity. But perhaps more importantly, it helps the children build connections with the local communities.

On Ko Kret, children get to work with Mon potters to make their own Mon style pottery. They learn how the Mon first settled on Ko Kret after fleeing persecution in Pegu, giving them a deeper empathy for people who are forced to move home.

Many traditional crafts use natural products. On home stays in Sukhothai, children on our trips have been taught how to dye fabrics using natural dyes, how to weave using traditional looms and how to create jewelry using coconut shells. All these activities allow the children to express themselves and develop their imaginations, whilst making connections with other cultures. The natural products also open up discussions about where we get our resources from and the sustainability of these resources.

Trips to Elephant PooPooPaper also promote thoughts on sustainable products. Here the children get to see how paper can be made using elephant dung and then get to make their own greetings card out of the poo paper. A globally sustainable future will rely on new innovations, so these trips are important for getting kids to think about how we can use waste materials to make new products.

Creative learning activities, such as art in nature, where participants create temporary pictures using natural products and writing poetry about waterfalls, are also important because they increase interactions with nature. The more interaction there is with nature during childhood, the more invested they will be in conserving it for the future.

A globally sustainable future will also require citizens to have a good sense of empathy and an ability to put themselves in other peoples’ shoes. Here at the Barge Program, several of our activities help with this. Guided imagery at Ayutthaya requires the children to imagine the past and what it would have been like for the people who lived there. Role-plays are another tool we use with children to achieve this goal.

Trips to Elephant PooPooPaper also promote thoughts on sustainable products. Here the children get to see how paper can be made using elephant dung and then get to make their own greetings card out of the poo paper. A globally sustainable future will rely on new innovations, so these trips are important for getting kids to think about how we can use waste materials to make new products. For World Environment Day this year, we worked with students from Buranawit School to create artwork with recycled materials such as old bottle tops.

Rhianne de Brouwer is currently working as an Environmental Education Facilitator at Traidhos Barge Program. She has also worked on Traidhos Camps Program in Chiang Mai.

Photos: Barge Program
Creativity can be the Bridge between Science and Humanities Education

Many children excel in both the sciences and humanities. As they grow older, however, students are encouraged to concentrate solely on one of these areas. Gareth Louden wonders wherever this practice is actually limiting students.

In his famous Rede Lecture of 1959, chemist and novelist C P Snow spoke of the separation of science and the humanities, and the lack of respect and understanding that often exists between the fields. He argued that this was detrimental to the future success of the country as many creative breakthroughs come from the interaction between the two cultures. Snow put a large part of the blame on what he called “our fanatical belief in educational specialisation” and focusing on “producing a tiny elite educated in one academic skill”. Unfortunately, not much seems to have changed.

The World Economic Forum’s 2016 future of jobs report highlighted that most educational systems still “provide highly siloed training” with a “dichotomy between humanities and sciences”. But industry needs people who can take on cross-functional roles and have technical, social and analytic skills. The report went on to list complex problem solving, critical thinking and creativity as the top three skills needed in the workforce by 2020.

One way to address these challenges in schools, colleges and universities is to make creativity a core part of the curriculum. We know creativity as the ability to come up with ideas or things that are new and valuable. But I would argue that creativity includes critical (or convergent) thinking as well as divergent thinking – that is, the exploration of a range of possible ideas or solutions.

A creative outlook

Creativity might traditionally be associated with the arts and humanities, but it is equally important for complex problem solving in science, technology, engineering and maths. Important creativity skills include listening, observation and empathy as well as experimentation, collaboration and analysis – skills from humanities and science.

Creativity is also driven by having a sense of purpose, of wanting to be better at something, and having the freedom to work in a flexible way. So it naturally demands and creates a bridge between the humanities and science.

It is not so common for a student to be an expert in both science and humanities, or even want to be – but this is not important. What is important is that students recognise the value of all subjects, and the role they can play in generating new ideas or things of value. Whether that value is for personal learning and growth, for communities or organisations, or for society as a whole.

There is a strong push currently to get more UK students to study STEM subjects. I am not against this effort, but I think it is also important to recognise that technology companies need workers who have skills in understanding people, society and culture. So subjects such as anthropology, business, history, psychology, marketing and design (to name but a few) are equally key.

Combining skills

So how can we embed creativity more fully into the curriculum? There are several approaches that could be considered. The first is to follow a more product-oriented learning approach. Advocated by Professor Yong Zhao, this sees students learning a subject by being creators rather than passive consumers.

Students are set projects that are perceived as relevant and important to them. Such an approach usually combines theory and practice and encourages use of some of the core creativity skills listed above. It can also involve collaboration with industry or community groups, or include ways of combining topics being covered in different subjects.

Another practical way of encouraging more creativity is by getting students to develop a range of possible ideas to address problems or challenges, rather than trying to get them to find the single right answer. The fear of failure is one of the biggest barriers to creativity. But one of the best ways of overcoming this is through play – playing with new materials, technologies, ideas or concepts, perhaps through physically making and testing prototypes.

Creativity can also be fostered by connecting students with other cultures, groups and organisations – both locally and globally – and getting out and about. Whether that is going to local care homes, connecting with schools and communities from around the world, understanding how to improve the environment, how new technology is being used to improve healthcare, how local farmers play a part in food production, or how new films and TV series are made – the possibilities are numerous.

This is not abstract thinking that will take years to embed into current school systems. In Wales, a new curriculum is being developed for schools, where these approaches are being explored. Based on the independent review by Professor Graham Donaldson, one of the core purposes of the new curriculum is to help students be “enterprising, creative contributors” with a shift in focus to a more connected curriculum with “areas of learning rather than discrete subjects”.

Though Snow’s comments are now almost 60 years old, and the separation of science and the humanities is still prevalent, the embedding of creativity in all levels of education is a way to bridge that divide.

Gareth Louden is Professor of Creativity at the Cardiff School of Art & Design at Cardiff Metropolitan University, and Director of the Centre for Creativity Ltd. He is currently involved in the Professional Learning Research and Development project run by the Welsh Government.

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The Art of Animals

*Jacob Smith takes a look at creativity from a different angle. When we think of creativity our minds drift to the acts and abilities of humans. But creative behaviour also exists within the animal kingdom.*

Most of us have become removed from the natural phenomena that occurs around us everyday. The man-made world, ever demanding of our attention, has led to a disconnection between humans and the natural world. We are generally unaware of the abundant variety and intelligence of the animals existing alongside us—animals that possess unimaginable organic creativity.

Some of the world’s greatest art is produced for love (or mating!). This is certainly true of the sculptures made by the Japanese pufferfish. Males, who are five centimeters long, build circular castles on the ocean floor measuring around two meters in length. This takes them seven to nine days of non-stop work. Once complete, he continues to doggedly preserve the castle’s structure, hoping it will capture the attention of a passing female. The mathematical perfection of the structure is impressive but the extra details are really mind-blowing. The tiny fish uses shells and coral to decorate the edges and even collects fine sediments that add colour. Once suitably impressed, the female lays her eggs in the centre and leaves. After fertilising the eggs, the artist turns househusband, guarding the eggs in his castle for around a week. He then moves on, ready to begin the whole process anew.

Many birds appear to be moved by aesthetics. Bowerbirds in Papua New Guinea and Australia have a mating ritual based on appearance. Male bowerbirds each create a bower, a bachelor pad of sorts that they decorate solely to attract females. They create an elaborate structure and gather various impressive objects, like fruits, flowers and man-made materials. The collection is sometimes arranged in order to create an optical illusion that holds the female’s attention. The bower decorations are colour coordinated for the same reason. This is intended to impress the female enough so that she will let the male perform his courting dance. The ritual begins when she first visits his bower. The male withdraws and gives her space to look around. If the structure and its decor is to her liking, she will return to judge his performance. The bowerbird is a fantastic mimic, incorporating sounds from the environment like streams, animals and even humans into his routine. For added flair while dancing, he incorporates props from his bower, holding them in his beak. He displays his plumage and can perform mesmerising tricks, like adjusting the size of each pupil independently. Once the performance is over, the female decides whether to remain in his bower or leave in search of a better show.

Many species of animals appear to appreciate aesthetics. Perhaps this is because it has a stimulating effect, as with humans, or because it infers the genetic strength of potential mates. The criteria used by the female pufferfish to judge a castle’s quality is still unclear. A more elaborate castle could infer greater genetic strength, or maybe the female just enjoys the effect created by different colours and shapes. This may even be a preference that differs between individuals.

Richard Prum, an acclaimed scientist who found key evidence showing that birds are the living descendants of dinosaurs, theorises that female birds often choose their mates based on individual aesthetic tastes. This contrasts with the mainstream view, which contends that genetic fitness is the underlying cause of attraction in animals.
The male’s abilities as a curator and performer are definitely impressive. It can take years for a male’s bower to even be worthy of inspection. Mating is a life-long pursuit that requires ‘craft, effort and ingenuity’, according to Sir David Attenborough, all for a single ‘life-defining moment’ of acceptance. To the casual observer, the interior design and choreography of the bowerbird shows obvious creativity. Females seem to appreciate the creative skill of a male too. However, this apparent aesthetic appreciation may actually just be a test of health and vitality—something females undeniably appreciate in a mating partner. Only males in peak physical condition, free of disability and illness, are able to perform a satisfactory courting dance, while bower decoration could show a male’s mental competency and work ethic. Yet, we can’t be sure that Prum is wrong. Female bowerbirds may have individual aesthetic tastes and so, like humans, have a personal and quite subjective taste in mates.

Bowerbirds have larger brains than crows and jays: related species that do not build bowers. On the surface, it seems logical that a larger brain would produce more nuanced creativity. If we consider brain size to be key, we should look to the animal kingdom’s largest brains.

Whales are the largest known animals to ever grace our planet, so it is no surprise that their brains are up to six times larger than our own. Some whales present a form of creativity that is only now being understood. The humpback, bowhead and some blue whales produce ‘whale song’, described by Marine Biologist Philip Clapham as “probably the most complex [song] in the animal kingdom.” These songs are a series of clicks, whistles and pulsed calls at varying frequencies. As opposed to animal calls, songs must be learned. Animals can use songs to demonstrate their membership of a group, or to show off their individuality. Kate Stafford, oceanographer at Washington State University, explains, ‘For marine mammals, acoustics is how they do everything. Humans are mostly visual animals, but marine mammals live in a three-dimensional habitat where sound and acoustic information is how they navigate, how they find food, how they communicate.’

Despite being a part of folklore for centuries, whale song was first recorded by accident in the 1950s. The US military’s newly produced hydrophones, created to track Russian submarines and sonar codes, picked up the strange sounds. Recordings found their way to whale specialist Roger Davy, who released the 1970 album, Songs of the Humpback Whale. It was a sensation and remains the highest selling environmental album ever. National Geographic even printed ten million copies of the album for its January 1979 issue, the greatest single pressing of any recording in history. The record led to the influential ‘Save The Whales’ movement.

Whale song is incredibly captivating because it simultaneously sounds beautiful to the human ear, yet completely alien. Experiencing whale song for the first time is incredible. Their songs range in length from ten minutes to twenty-three hours and songs have been seen to move across an entire ocean. Songs pass from pod to pod with each creating their own ‘remixed’ version—imagine an ocean-wide game of Chinese whispers. This begins to look like a shared culture among whales of a particular species. Original songs are regularly created too, most often during the breeding season. This suggests that mating success is linked to creativity in these whales. This link between creative behaviour and mating is what drives the incredible creativity seen in pufferfish, bowerbirds, whales and many other animals. The more creative an individual, the more likely they are to reproduce and so pass on their genes. The result is an ever more creatively talented population.

It is clear that many animals possess the capacity for inventing novel solutions to the problems they face. Jane Goodall’s discovery of tool use among chimpanzees in the 1960s proved that animals could innovate like humans. This officially blurred the line between ourselves and the animal kingdom. Prominent scientists, like Prum, are convinced animals have subjective tastes, just like humans. Anyone with pets understands that animals each have their own personalities and preferences. Prum’s theory further bridges the perceived gap between humans and other animals. Individuality does seem to exist in animals that perform creatively. For example, when designing a bower the colour scheme chosen by males varies completely. There are many things we don’t yet understand about the natural world, many hidden levels of complexity that we are yet to discover. If we remain humble, there is much we can still learn from the world around us. Since the first cave paintings, 40,000 years ago, nature has inspired us—long may this continue.

Jacob Smith is the Editor of Traidhos Quarterly. He loves the outdoors and is fascinated by nature.

Photos: Wikimedia Commons, Google Images
Arts Integration: Improving Teaching and Learning for All Students

Susan Morgan outlines the benefits of integrating arts across the curriculum by referencing The Eight Studio Habits Of Mind devised by Harvard Project Zero.

‘...the arts teach children that their personal signature is important and that answers to questions and solutions to problems need not be identical.’—Ericson.

All learners are different; some are good with numbers while others can express themselves with words, some are visual learners or need to learn by moving to a beat. Studies show that when art is integrated into the classroom, literacy and math scores improve. Arts integration is a method of teaching students to construct understanding through various art forms, such as, visual arts, drama and music. It is through the arts that students can learn to build stronger communities, gain cultural understanding and improve their self-esteem. Furthermore, these art forms give students the capacity to connect with their natural abilities through their desire to socialise, be creative, to manipulate materials and to be quizzical and impulsive.

By supporting the natural skills students already have, teachers are able to facilitate learning and give students the tools they need for gaining the skills that they are already developing.

In visual art classes learning goes beyond the basic skill-based techniques by allowing students to develop good studio habits through inquiry based learning. In the visual arts, students develop the Eight Studio Habits of Mind, as founded by Harvard Project Zero. This consists of Develop Craft, Engage and Persist, Envision, Express, Reflect, Question and Explain, Stretch and Explore, Understand Art World, Communities.
These eight habits of mind are important in a wide range of disciplines, not only in the visual arts. Students must learn a great deal about tools and materials in a science lab, and this kind of learning is analogous to developing craft in the art studio. The skills of engage and persist and stretch and explore are clearly important in any endeavor: students need to learn to find problems of interest and work with them deeply over sustained periods of time, and to experiment and take risks. The skills of observation and envision are clearly important in the sciences. The skill of reflection (including self-evaluation) is important in any discipline. Perhaps the least general of the eight habits of mind are express and understand art world. Yet even these might have broader reaches. Clearly learning to express is often important in any kind of writing that one does, even in analytical non-fiction. Understand art world may be more broadly construed as learning to see links between what one does as a student in a particular domain with what professionals in that domain do. (Winner et al).

By incorporating the studio habits of mind within art integrated lessons students will be able to see how art skills are transferable to other areas of learning, such as science, math, literature and history. Through the arts students will learn to develop a craft, persevere to find a solution, make self-observations and reflections that refine understanding and understand the world to make connections to others.

Susan Morgan is an Art teacher at Prem. She recently received her Master’s degree in Art Education from the University of Nebraska, Kearney and has exhibited her own artwork in New York and Chiang Mai.

Photos: Susan Morgan, Prem
The Movember Foundation started in 2003, when two friends from Melbourne, Australia (Travis Garone and Luke Slattery) were discussing how the moustache was such an unpopular fashion trend at the time and began wondering how they could bring it back. They developed a challenge for themselves and their friends to ‘grow’ for a cause. Thirty friends accepted the challenge and grew mo’s in order to raise money for men’s health and prostate cancer. Fifteen years later, over five million Mobros and Mosistas get involved in the Movember movement, raising awareness and funds for men’s health issues including depression, suicide, prostate cancer and testicular cancer.

Over those fifteen years, the Movember Foundation has had to come up with many creative ways to gain, engage and motivate members. They quickly realised that, without growth, their cause would lose popularity, much like the moustache. However, unlike the moustache, there are many ways for Movember to remain popular and attract more people to help, despite fashion trends that make facial hair more common.

In order to promote Movember’s vision and expand its membership, the Movember Foundation continually revitalizes itself. A variety of promotional campaigns, contests, the Gentlemen’s Ride vintage motorcycle ride, the ‘Move’ initiative and the Half Mast Mo are just a few examples of over 1,200 projects the Movember Foundation has developed to satisfy their vision.

At Prem, Movember first appeared eight years ago. Since then, there has been a variety of faces involved to varying degrees. Some Mobros choose to grow to show solidarity to the cause, others grow and seek donations, even more grow and spread awareness, and the elite Mobros participate in the triad: grow, fundraise and spread awareness. Mosistas are ever-present; helping to raise awareness as well as supporting their special Mobros.

For this Mobro, a particular focus is awareness. While I do fundraise, participate in the Gentlemen’s Ride, and challenge myself to ‘move’ every day, I feel that being at a school makes raising awareness paramount. If we can influence and encourage young people to take care of themselves and those around them, we are doing the right thing.

Please visit movember.com for more information.

The Creative Aspects of Movember

Prem’s head Mobro, Steve Service, breaks down Movember and shares his own Movember inspired ballads.
One creative approach I take to raise awareness is to write and recite ballads about Movember.

Below are two ballads I wrote.

The first is about my cousin who succumbed to cancer at the age of 44. The second is addressed to our students.

**The Face of Cancer**

The face of cancer, it’s plain to see
Is like everyone else, but never me
It’s the smokers in society
It’s the unfit, but it’s never me
The face of cancer is never me.

Here’s the story of my cousin, Gary
A couple years ago, his life became quite scary
He’d noticed something that had made him wary
So he went to the doctor hoping for the contrary
He thought, “The face of cancer, it could never be me.”

But that wasn’t what was meant to be
They noticed tumours during the colonoscopy
Tests and treatments were started immediately
Radiation first, then chemotherapy
The face of cancer had changed for me.

No longer was it the face of the unhealthy or old
It’s not just the smokers or the drinkers, as told
It could be a person like you, young and bold
Having your life plan unravel, unfold.

The face of cancer can be you or be me.

Gary is an example of what you should do
If cancer should show its face inside of you
Don’t hesitate but do what is true
Stay proactive (and positive too!)
His face of cancer is my enemy.

So heed this story and please listen to a bro
Who tries to raise awareness by growing a mo’
Because he cares about you, it’s not just a show
Take care of yourself and help the people you know
The face of cancer has no place for me.

**Check It Out (a chant)**

We grow a mo in Movember
So that all men will remember to
**Check it out, check it out.**

My mo is meant to raise awareness, not hysteria
I’m talkin’ about cancer of the private area
Check yours out in private, not the cafeteria
**But check it out, check it out.**

Mental health issues can lead to suicide
Get help immediately, find a friend to confide
Showing some weakness should not affect your pride
**Ask them to check it out, check it out.**

1 in 7 males will get cancer of the prostate
See a doctor early, be sure and don’t hesitate
Once you turn 40, make a doctor trip a yearly date
**The doctor will check it out, check it out.**

Some cancers form genetically
Know your family’s past, to ease anxiety
Investigate heredity, your personal history
**Go check it out, check it out.**

Let’s find a cure and rid cancer from society
With everyone united, it’s a real possibility
Everyone here has a responsibility
**Get your cheque book out, cheque book out.**

If you’re a girl you might think this won’t affect me
But you’re wrong, you know male friends and family
They may need your help, so talk convincingly
**Get them to check it out, check it out.**

Steve Service has a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of British Columbia and a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Northern British Columbia. He also has certificates in electronics and design from the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Prior to joining Prem in 2011, Steve taught in other schools in Thailand, as well as in Brunei Darussalam, Egypt, Indonesia and his home country, Canada. In his spare time, Steve enjoys traveling, mountain biking, motorcycling and maintaining his yard and garden.

Photos: Steve Service, Movember Foundation
I wish life imitated art. Then, finally, I could get on the BTS while an intense, electronic soundtrack played and I looked out of the window broodingly at the Bangkok sunset, moments before I get drawn inexplicably into some sort of gangster-related heist where I get to diffuse a bomb or skid around in Ryan Gosling’s car and wear his jacket from that movie. Or, perhaps, I could meet the love of my life in an awkward elevator scene because they overhear me listening to some ‘obscure’ indie band from the 80’s that I thought only I liked. Or, y’know, I could at least get bitten by a radioactive bug and gain super athleticism. But whatever, it’s cool. The point is that none of these things have ever happened to me, and probably never will. Nobody likes The Smiths anymore anyway.

But are there times when life does imitate what we read, hear and watch through our pages, headphones and screens? Or rather, can art influence us to do things, to change, on a personal and societal level? My hope is that it can. And not just so that I get to meet Iron Man.

Behavioral psychology argues that we react to emotional stimuli ahead of information and that our reactions are stronger. This can be seen pretty clearly in the polarised opinions one finds in the news and online—we either love or loathe Trump’s recent statement; put Beyonce’s new album on a pedestal or in a pedal bin; erase the latest season of Game of Thrones from existence or watch it over and over forever until Jon Snow’s face is seared into our brains. Those are, to say the least, pretty strong emotions and ones which leave no room for the in-between or for the nuance in an argument. Undoubtedly, this is unhealthy in politics. Politics demands reasoning and fairness but has historically tried to play on our deep-set hopes and fears. This is done through quotable, emotive language in speeches and attention-grabbing media headlines full of buzzwords and absolutes. But what about in a field that is intended to be wholly emotive? In art, emotions, images and ideas are offered up, often without an explicit motive. Whether the medium is painting, music, theatre or film, art allows us to experience a new perspective on ourselves and on the world around us. It is up to us whether we act upon the insights we have gained or let them pass. The potential for art to provide people with the motivation to change is huge. The emotional medium has a stronger impact than plain information.

Utilising art to make a change in the world can be demonstrated in various ways, and is something that has been practiced around the world increasingly in the past century, particularly since the bohemian movements associated with psychedelic rock in the 1960’s. In Thailand the emotional stimulus for change was found in เพลงเพื่อชีวิต or ‘Songs for Life’. This style of songwriting, formed in the early 1970’s by bands like Caravan and national legends Carabao, revolutionised the Thai protest song, using everything from Thai traditional styles, reggae and ska, American-style folk and Latin-influenced guitar to criticise politicians and dictators, big business, environmental destruction and western military intervention. Both Carabao and Caravan regularly use the image of the buffalo in their work, with one of Caravan’s most famous songs เซนเทนเนียร์ (“Man and Buffalo”) attempting to mobilise rural workers into action, and Carabao’s band name itself being a reference to a type of buffalo found in the Philippines, where the band members met. Culturally significant, the animal implies the patience, hard work and fight found inside the everyday working person. Undoubtedly these bands, and the wave of artists that followed and still arise today, were a major influence in the movement towards democracy and the general pride felt for the Thai working class. An improved quality of life in the country led to expression, which in turn inspired movements.

Unlike the fine arts, political policy and scientific journals, artistic activism doesn’t need people to ‘get it’. By being an activist who engages with current issues, it is inherently wrapped up in popular culture. Modern art calling for change and highlighting the current state of affairs can be seen in everything from mainstream hip-hop music (see Kendrick Lamar’s To Pimp a Butterfly, Stormzy’s BRIT Awards performance and Childish Gambino’s viral sensation “This Is America”), to street art (look up el Seed’s inspirational graffiti on major monuments in Gazez, Cape Town and Rio de Janeiro, as well as Banksy’s self-shredding auction piece). Even in our family-friendly BBC shows, viewed
by hundreds of millions worldwide—so popular they slow down the entire internet system in China—we can find the motivation to make a difference. Blue Planet II, last year’s most viewed British TV show, created a big change in how people thought about environmentalism.

Nature documentaries are the masters at getting us to care. Most of the world never knew they had such an affinity for the well-being of baby iguanas until we anxiously cheered them on to wriggle free from a snake’s squeeze in 2016’s Planet Earth II. Of course, much of this is down to incredible editing and camerawork, but Attenborough’s documentaries still attempt to find the real connection we have with these animals and environments. Rather than settling for a ten minute, end-of-season segment, as nature docs often do, Blue Planet II wove themes of human-to-nature interactions throughout its stories. Sperm whales trying to munch on buckets, octopi lingering in sickly reefs and the short-finned pilot whale who refused to let go of her baby, dead due to toxic plastic ingestion. It would be hard for people, in those moments of emotional prompting, not to see the tragedy in these stories, and that we are the bad guys. Companies like Hitwise, who analyses online patterns, instantly detected a rise in users searching for conservation charities and ways to recycle plastic after each episode. Major environmental advocates, including WWF and The Marine Conservation Society, saw similar increases in traffic. At the governmental level, the UK’s Blue Belt scheme, which looks to protect coastal habitats, referenced the series as an influence in its mobilisation and the Environmental Audit Committee bulked up its efforts to crack down on plastic usage after noticing “an increasing public appetite for urgent action in this area”, shortly after the series had aired.

But not everyone can have the gravitas of a BBC produced, Sir David Attenborough led, worldwide TV series. It’s cool to keep it local though. Activism aims at shifting some sort of power relation, changing the focus from one thing to another. In smaller circles, art is a hugely effective catalyst for communities to reaffirm their values, understand issues and assess how they think about themselves. Ultimately, this is why folk and traditional dance, storytelling and music even exist. Across Bangkok, young artists are starting to engage with the blight of plastic on their city and the importance of the Chao Phraya as a resource, through performance and discussion.

At Traidhos’s Three-Generation Barge Program we aim to forge a connection between our students and Thailand’s cultural and natural character. From emotive links, produced through guided imagery, poetry, painting, role play or often just being immersed in these environments, our students can start to get a sense of why the natural spaces around them mean so much, to us as humans, but also the plants and animals we live alongside. Once this deeper connection is made, we are more likely to actively seek hard facts and to take action. Activism cannot come from the apathetic.

Of course, art in and of itself cannot restructure our whole society. People’s self-fed curiosity and willingness to speak out, and our governments’ efficiency and willingness to listen, both play the largest roles in changing the world as we know it. Yet, how we know the world, and what we choose to do with that point of view, lies within our artists’ pens, paints, cameras, strings and bodies.

Raymond Wilson is an Environmental Educator with experience in creative writing, music and theatre. He is currently exploring the potential art has in informing and motivating people around environmentalism. Eco-art workshops, performances and camps programs are all in development and newly available to participate in at the Traidhos Three-Generation Barge Program.

Photos: Raymond Wilson, Prem, Google Images
In my search for educational opportunities within the international community, I have found Prem to have the strongest foundation for building a true appreciation of music. Since August, I have been assisting Ajarn Laurent with PYP Music classes. The classes include various instruments, such as drums, ukuleles, xylophones, bamboo sticks and traditional Thai instruments. The vocal portion for students ranging from Early Years 3 to Grade 5 have been learning and working with a variety of songs from around the world. This includes songs in Swahili, Bulgarian, French, Maui, Dutch, English and Maori.

Older students perform a piece they’ve learned in class at the end of term concert. ‘My G5 and Intensive English Program students performed this simplified, yet still highly complex arrangement of Steve Reich’s Clapping Music. Very exciting and advanced work for such a young age!’ – Laurent, on the term one performance piece. For myself, being on the stage and experiencing the harmony of the students was a truly exhilarating experience.

Thalea Tane, an indigenous visiting teacher/artist from Aotearoa in New Zealand, is returning to Prem to teach our students new rhythms, movements and meanings. The song Te Iwi E is quite captivating because of its corresponding commands and actions. ‘The actions are aligned to the meaning of the words,’ Thalea explains. G4 and G5 create their own movements to the songs they learn in classes.

A love of music is shared globally, with a multitude of different styles and interpretations. It has always been a part of my life through art and dance and I feel grateful to have the opportunity to assist Laurent and gain a new, deeper musical understanding.

We have a wonderful new PYP Music building, which includes soundproof rooms for solo practice and a large open space for group work. This shows the intention to improve and refine the musical learning experience at Prem. The open, spacious new classroom creates an atmosphere that encourages students to play freely, without constraint.

Classes not only gear students towards an instrument that truly excites them, but are there to teach harmony and unity, both as an individual and as a group. Students undertake something new, leaving their comfort zone to play with unknown beats and sounds. They are encouraged to interpret these sounds individually, inspiring agency and self-confidence. Agency, creativity and self-expression are key strengths needed to be successful as a musician.

The thing with music is that you can’t just do it once by yourself or in a group and be harmonious, it takes practice, dedication and a group mentality. Above all, it requires a level of trust within yourself to just try, even if you make mistakes, and to keep on trying. PYP Music has an environment of encouragement, as demonstrated by Laurent. The students reflect this in their eagerness to come to class and show the new skills and songs they have learnt independently. My first term assisting in PYP Music has been a great learning experience, helping to make me a better musician and person.

As part of the third annual Junior School Showcase, our students will perform in ‘Happy as Larry’, a concert including songs and dance on February 15th. All the student body, parents, guardians and community members of Prem are welcome to come and join us.

Francia Laya shares her experience of assisting in the Primary Years Program (PYP) Music classes at Prem.

Francia Laya is a Boarding Mentor at Prem. She has been assisting in PYP Music since joining the school.

Photos: Francia Laya
In term one I gained new skills and explored many new medias. In my Art A class I worked on a self-portrait with pencils. I used various different pencils which offered differing tones to create depth and texture. This was my first self portrait, or living portrait of any kind. It was difficult at first but after a few practice attempts I managed to get the details right. It helped that in my Art B classes we were learning about objects and depth. Living objects have a unique texture, most are smoother, without the restricted shapes that most other objects have. Overall, I was very happy with the final result and look forward to my next self-portrait.

Visual arts class at Prem has taught me the basic skills of art and has helped me to choose a career path. I want to be an artist in either Berlin or Milan because both are incredible artistic centres with great universities. My dad is an artist and photographer so I grew up in the art community. That’s probably one of the reasons I want to be an artist. I feel like artists have no boundaries, they can express and help others by opening up controversial topics, such as human rights. The art world is a wonderland for me. Playing with medias to create something very intimate or even absurd gives me a feeling of real agency and control. Ultimately, art connects people, through exhibitions, communities, workshops and ideas.

Lourdes Rampa
Me saw me-self
Pencil, Photograph, Acrylic and Yarn on paper
37.5 x 47.5cm