

Alumnus Curates First Exhibition

2016 John Curtin College of the Arts (JCCA) GAT Drama Graduate Maya Quinn curated her first exhibition as a part of the 2022 Youth Week WA KickstART Festival presented by Propel Youth Arts WA.

Propel Youth Arts WA is the peak body for youth arts in Western Australia, providing young people aged 12-26 with access and opportunities to engage with arts and culture on their own terms.

The exhibition, *weight/wait* formed an interrogation of various axes of systemic oppression.

Curated by Maya Quinn, in mentorship with Aisyah Aaqil Sumito, *weight/wait* included four young artists.

Mia Page, Neville, Djilandi, and Rain OnSunday bring together varied ways of making such as painting, poetry, installation, sculpture, and writing.

This conversation meets at the axes of transness, queerness, First Nations sovereignty, self-determination, and identity on stolen land.

The artworks reclaim undervalued mediums often diminished as 'women's work', with the amalgam of textiles and other modes of making such as digital painting and the written/spoken word to centralise gender-nonconformity.

The piece's present identity in the space, with both an installation centered on the physical occupation of the femme body and a window of introspection into the mapped worlds of country through traditional and cultural ways of painting.

The onus for change imposes an insurmountable weight upon those living at the mouth of oppression, yet it sparks a burgeoning collective desire to resist, to protest, and to challenge; to quit waiting for things to change.

This exhibition was a small capturing of resistance in the face of such a Sisyphean task, giving expression to the queer experience, unpacking antiquated gender discourse, and centering

decolonisation.

After taking one Visual Arts enrichment course at JCCA, Maya was inspired to study an undergraduate degree in Art History at the University of Western Australia.

Maya received an ATAR of 99.6, received a Subject Exhibition for Literature, Certificates of Excellence for Drama, Literature and Modern History and a Certificate of Distinction.

We caught up with Maya recently to ask her some questions about her experience with the festival.

We love hearing from our alumni and are so proud of her achievements.

JCCA: Can you tell me more about the art class that inspired you to further pursue visual arts studies?

MQ: I took Art as an elective in Year 10 with Ms. McCaughey, thinking I would enjoy the process of making as an outlet. Instead, over the course of that semester I found myself much more intrigued by the process of discussing, analysing and re-framing the visual through the written word. The theory component to this class was, for me, the perfect combination of the textual, historical and creative. After a gap year, despite having mixed ideas about what subject and form of post-secondary education I'd pursue, I thought about the last time I had been intellectually thrilled and chose to do a Bachelors in History of Art at UWA based on that.

JCCA: How did you get involved in this role and what were some of your favourite aspects of the process?

MQ: I found it through sheer networking. History of Art is a great degree, but fairly impractical. The content and class structure is geared towards isolated and individual work. It was important if I were to have any opportunities or prospects in my field once graduating, that I supplement my studies with extracurricular/volunteer commitments. So I joined the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery Student Advisory Committee, and later got a job there and one of my coworkers told me about a mentorship program in which the successful applicant would be guided through the process of delivering and curating an exhibition. It's run by Propel Youth Arts WA, in collaboration with Cool Change Contemporary and my mentor was artist, writer and curator Aisyah Aaqil Sumito. I highly recommend Propel to JCCA students, as the opportunities, grants and programs are plentiful.

A few of my favourite aspects included hearing and seeing updates from the artists, watching as their works developed; troubleshooting with them, encouraging them and making connections between the artists' works that they haven't yet realised.

JCCA: Do you have any stand out/best memories from your time at John Curtin?

MQ: I always liked the lunch-time performances! John Curtin is special because being here makes you feel comfortable to express yourself. Everyone who comes here cares enough to express how they feel. I was relaxed and focused on peace – I wouldn't have felt as free elsewhere.

Although the festival is complete for 2022, there are plenty of chances to get involved with Propel Youth Arts WA. We were also represented by 2019 graduate Esté Breytenbach and current Year 12 student Hazel Dortch who were members of the Youth Planning Committee for KickstART festival.

Check out Propel Youth Arts WA to get involved.

Want to let us know what you've been up to since leaving the College? Contact our Communications Officer, Steph Hale via stephanie.hale@education.wa.edu.au

Image Credit: Rain Onsunday, 'Sunday Worship', 2022. Digital media. Cinematographer: David Le May.