

Canal to Creek

WestConnex | Transurban

THE WESTCONNEX PUBLIC ART PROGRAM



VADEA
NSW

VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

DEBORAH HALPERN

THE FOUR GRACES | STAGE 5 WORKSHEET



Deborah Halpern
The Four Graces

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

VOCABULARY - Kinetic, plinth, mosaic, portals, figurative, models, polystyrene, armature

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - ARTWORK

The Four Graces are medium-to-large scale kinetic figures made from stainless steel armature, dense polystyrene foam and glass tile mosaic. Standing at approximately 5 metres tall, each of the four graces welcomes people to Linear Park in Kingsgrove as part of the WestConnex Public Art Program - Canal to Creek.

TASK - Go to the [Canal to Creek website](#) and take a tour of this work - take screen shots and paste them into your Visual Arts diaries. Annotate your images with reflections and observations of the artwork.

While each of the four forms are part of a family group, despite their placement at different entries to Linear Park, they do incorporate individual elements and are named to show what they most embody in nature:

1. **Wind** is located at the north-east entrance. Its hair is blowing in the wind and its black body is adorned with the stars and moon. It embodies characteristics of the esoteric, mysterious and ancient.
2. **River** is located at the north-west entrance and its hair waves and flows in both directions. Its blue body incorporates waves and references the Cook River. It embodies characteristics of dreams, transition, development and creativity.
3. **Cloud** is located at the south-east entrance and has cloud shaped hair and halo. Its green body is adorned with leaves and flowers, taken from local indigenous plants and is an embodiment of nature.
4. **Solar** is located at the south-west entrance and has an electric element and crown. Its small ears are like an owl or a possum and its red body has crossed arms and sand dunes.

The two works at the southern entrances - "Cloud" and "Solar" - relate to each other across the southern side of Kingsgrove Road. "Cloud" is connected and concerned for nature and "Solar" with the world of science and the future.

The two works at the northern entrances to the park - "Wind" and "River" - are young beings conversing across Kingsgrove Road. They are outgoing, inquisitive, adventurous.

The Four Graces embody the Canal to Creek theme of ecology through its integral engagement with the wind and the sun, as well as the rain, to animate the works - connecting the community with the natural forces through art. Each sculpture utilises wind to create movement and energises the space by making visible the invisible (by working directly with the elements of nature). The wind would turn the heads of each character, so that they are never the same, whilst the sun would reflect off the facets of the tiles, throwing dots of light over the surrounding built and natural environment.

Their presence at the Linear Park entrance transforms the site and these four benevolent beings bring humour, story, warmth and humanity to these discrete and inviting park portals.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - ARTIST

Having grown up in a creative family, Halpern has engaged in artistic practice over many years and across a variety of forms. She is most known as a sculptor that incorporates glass tile mosaic with whimsical, playful and biomorphic forms that are dynamic and visually engaging having been inspired by Halpern's own world of imagination. Halpern works collaboratively with fabricators and engineers to ensure her small scale models can be translated to large scale public artworks.



CONCEPTUAL PRACTICE - INTENTIONS

TASK: Highlight Halpern’s ideas, choices, actions and materials in the text below and over the page.

Deborah Halpern states: “*The work I make is for people, about people, drawn from the concerns and passions of people. Communities want and need places that inspire, surprise and delight and I create works that optimistically and authentically respond to people and place. The land, the weather, the creatures that inhabit that place and the ones who pass through - I am inspired by time and temporality, the seen and the unseen.*”

The Four Graces are intended to connect to each other as a family, a group of friends, as members of the community, as members of the human family and draw largely on four of the brief’s curatorial themes – community, ecology, heritage and transformation. By transforming the entrance to Linear Park in Kingsgrove, the artist hopes that **The Four Graces** will become an integral part of people’s daily lives and that people develop personal relationships with the work. She also hopes to engage people with the site of Kingsgrove and Linear Park in ways that inspire them to be creative, imaginative and playful.

MATERIAL PRACTICE - CHOICES, ACTIONS, MATERIALS

The Four Graces is a large-scale collection of four kinetic sculptures that incorporate vibrant colour. Made of glass mosaic tiles, the sparkling sunlight/moonlight/streetlight/car headlights would continually animate the works. The wind will move the heads, bringing life to the works watching over the people using Linear Park, and using Kingsgrove Road.

The Four Graces are approximately 5 metres high (highest), 1.6 metres wide, 1.6 metres deep. Their bodies are made of stainless steel, solid carved foam and fibreglass with glass mosaic-tiled heads and bent pipe hair which have all been tweaked and refined as part of the collaborative process between artist, fabricator and engineer. Each work has a stainless-steel armature for strength and support which is then inserted into concrete plinths of varying shapes to link them to each individual artwork.

These plinths will be developed in collaboration with local schools/children, the treatment of each of the sculpture plinths/bases would employ mosaics to inject colour and offer further visual storytelling opportunities that reflect the energy and qualities of the community. The concrete footings or plinths are decorated with designs inspired by children from local primary schools as a result of community workshops held in primary schools where drawings and language are translated by the artist into mosaics adorning the bases

TASK: Make links between Halpern’s ideas and her choices, actions and materials by completing the table below. An example has been provided.

IDEAS	CHOICES, ACTIONS, MATERIALS
The Four Graces are intended to be a family group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halpern chose to make all four forms figurative - based on the human form. • Halpern has chosen to use similar materials, processes and techniques so they all have similar characteristics but be individual as well - just like a family. • They are installed in sight of each other and will sometimes appear to be communicating when they are facing each other.
They are intended to become an integral part of people’s everyday lives	
They are inspired by nature	

WRITING TASK

Each row in the table of the previous task forms the basis of an extended writing task on Halpern's artmaking practice. Consider the following question:

Explain how Halpern's choices, actions and materials are informed by the intentions behind *The Four Graces*.

SIMPLE INTRODUCTION	Halpern incorporates a variety of choices, actions and materials in her work <i>The Four Graces</i> in order to communicate themes and ideas of family, nature and connectedness to place.
FIRST PARAGRAPH	Halpern intended <i>The Four Graces</i> to be a family group. This is evidenced by her choices to make all four forms figurative , based on the human form, and to construct their forms using similar materials, processes and techniques so they all have similar characteristics but be individual as well - just like a family. They are also installed in sight of each other and will sometimes appear to be communicating when they are facing each other.
SECOND PARAGRAPH	(expand the second row of the table)
THIRD PARAGRAPH:	(expand the third row of the table)
CONCLUSION	

CONGRATULATIONS ON WRITING AN EXTENDED RESPONSE :)

ARTMAKING TASK

VISUAL ARTS DIARY - PREPARATORY WORK

Visit your local park or wander the school playground with your Visual Arts diary, some drawing materials and a bag to collect objects off the ground. Draw the natural textures and features of the park or school as well as the man-made elements. If any objects have fallen from the trees and plants, collect them in your bag.

Have a friend or classmate pose for you and do a series of continuous line drawings of various poses in your Visual Arts diary. Inspired by Halpern's whimsical models, design a companion figure in your Visual Arts diary that incorporates your drawn elements and continuous line drawing. What name would you give your sculpture idea?

SCULPTURE TASK

MATERIALS:

- Bamboo skewers
- Wooden plinth base
- Wire
- Papier mache pulp
- Water

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Drill a hole into the wooden plinth base and glue your bamboo skewer into the base - you will want to have the pointy end at the top
2. Make your wire elements and set aside - you may want to paint them prior to assembly
3. Mix up some papier mache pulp to a thick consistency
4. Start with the bottom shapes first so you can slide them down the skewer
5. Mould the shapes you have designed and slide them into place on your skewer. While the paper mache is wet, insert the wire elements into place and smooth them into place - you may want to put a horizontal piece of skewer in where the shoulders and hips go so you can add arms and legs to your form
6. Place wet sculpture in an airy place to dry (be careful - a damp or airless storeroom may encourage mold growth)
7. Using bright acrylic paints and small brushes, paint patterns and motifs from your Visual Arts diary
8. OPTIONAL: You may like to use clear varnish to make your figures shiny - use a well-ventilated area and follow manufacturer's instructions.
9. If you have done this activity in a class, exhibit all your sculptures together and create a little installation. Document them in the park or school grounds that inspired them.



10. EXTENSION:

Research puppet making and develop a figure using these new skills