

Canal to Creek

WestConnex

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THE WESTCONNEX PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

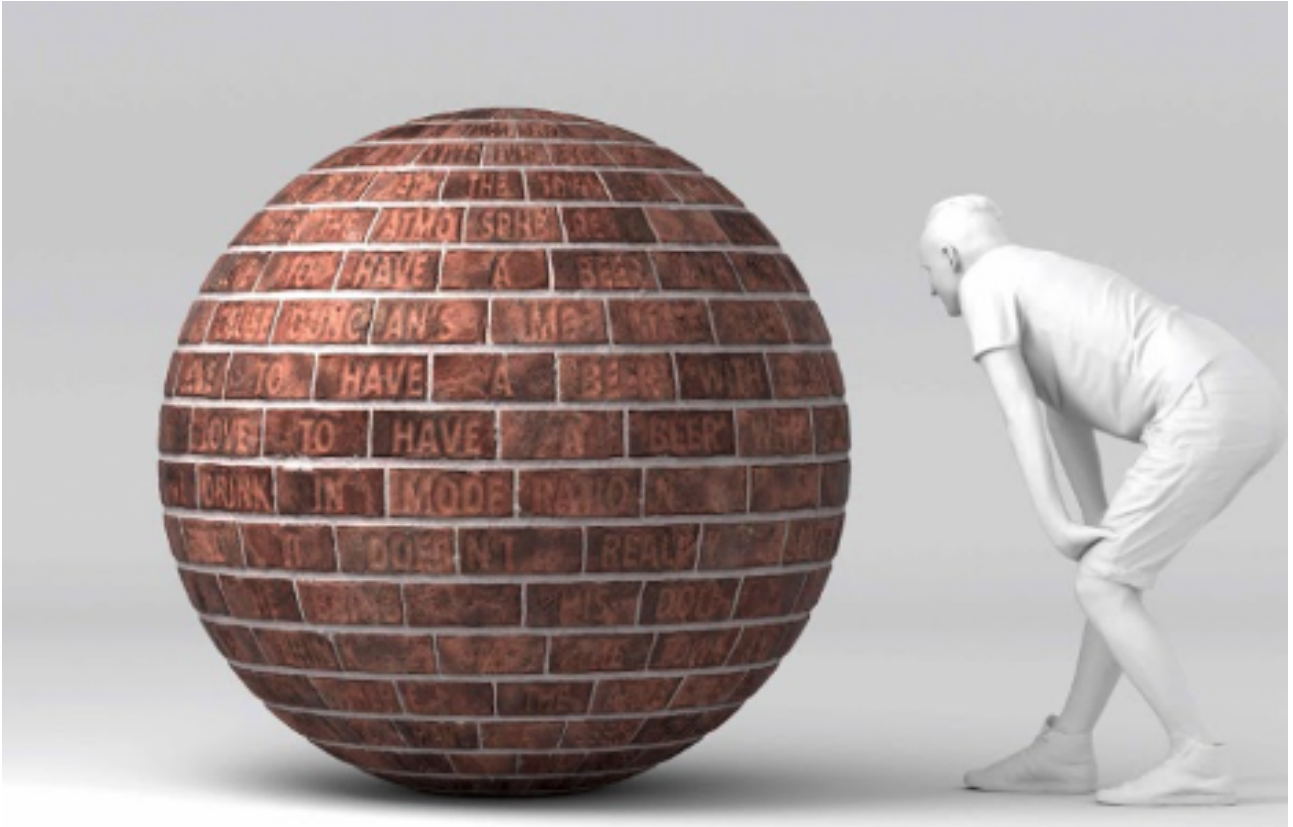


VADEA
NSW

VISUAL ARTS & DESIGN
EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION

GORDON YOUNG

DOWN TO EARTH | STAGE 5 WORKSHEET



Gordon Young, *Down to Earth*

CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

VOCABULARY - Site-specific, installation, sculpture, public art, spherical, text, typographical, bespoke, appropriation, re-contextualise, re-configure, circumnavigate, heritage, identity, clay, kiln

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - ARTWORK

Down to Earth is a series of eight text based sculptures that form a writer's walk along Campbell Road, St Peters. Each sculpture incorporates recontextualised historical and contemporary texts from Australian lyrics, poetry, diaries and stories that speak of the diversity of Australian culture and identity.

Constructed from bespoke handmade bricks, the artworks materiality directly references Sydney Park's iconic heritage. The artist intends this work to be a celebration of the cultural significance of brick for the local community with historical connections to the iconic heritage of the brick kilns, chimneys and vast clay pits, as well as the urban character of St Peters brick homes.

Visit the site either physically or you can access an online, interactive experience [here](#). Document your visit with photos or screen shots in your Visual Arts diary.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK - ARTIST

Gordon Young is one of the UK's leading artists in the field of public art who often includes typographical elements in his artmaking. With over 20 years' experience he has created projects as diverse as a series of 20m sculptural / climbing walls in Blackpool, a forest of typographic trees in Crawley Library, a Wall of Wishes in a Bristol school, and a cursing stone in Carlisle.

Visit the [Artist Website](#) and see what else you can learn about him.

- Research Gordon Young's background. Where is he from?
- What types of artworks does Gordon Young make and why does he make them?
- Does Gordon Young's background and country of origin have an impact on how you might interpret this artwork?

ART PRACTICE

Gordon Young intends **Down to Earth** to be a celebration of the cultural significance of brick for the local community with historical connections to the iconic heritage of the brick kilns, chimneys and vast clay pits, as well as the urban character of St Peters brick homes. As a consequence, **Down To Earth** is a site specific installation that responds to its local environment and history and the 'Writers Walk' presents a diverse mix of found and original, historical and contemporary texts including lyrics, poetry, diaries and stories.

Constructed from bespoke handmade bricks, the artwork's materiality directly references Sydney Park's heritage. Gordon Young has used repeated spherical forms with changing scale and colours bespoke to the various sites. Working with recycled, newly mass produced and handmade pressed bricks that emphasise the text into the spherical forms is a challenging shape. The skills and experience for producing spherical brickwork was of interest to local bricklayers, although Gordon Young states that none had come across work like this in many years. The project demanded collaboration with bricklayers and brick suppliers, brick manufacturers, landscapers as well as writers. The text is drawn from creatives, past and present, who have written lyrics, poetry, diaries and stories and these are incorporated into the bricks.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK – WORLD

While Sydney Park's heritage brick kilns and chimneys remain, the vast deep clay pits from which the abundance of quality clay was extracted, are now gone and re-purposed. The area provided the essential raw materials upon which contemporary urban Australia developed and is the prime location to celebrate, commemorate and recognise the importance of clay and bricks in their material, physical and cultural form.

- In addition to the bricks, what are other features of **Down To Earth** that refer directly to Australian culture and its history?
- What is the importance of text in this work and how does it communicate cultural meaning?



EXTENSION ACTIVITY

How do public artworks communicate a sense of time and place?

Refer to **Down to Earth** and one other Canal to Creek artworks in your response.

ARTMAKING TASK

1. **Create a collage** - either as a mixed media artwork or as a digital representation. Gather three historical images, a song and a poem that represent a place/country, a culture/people. Arrange and layer your images with selected text.
2. **Create a TEXT-U-RED wall.**
 - a. After visiting a site or walking to their own art specific location (this can be a constructed space at the school), each student can identify a word that reflects them and this experience
 - b. Each student produces a clay tile 8cm high and varying lengths depending on the chosen word (*if you do not have a kiln, you could use air dry clay*)
 - c. Create a clay slab (1.5cm thick). Cut away excess clay to form a rectangular straight edge. Words can either be carved or incised into the slab or can have the letters attached. See images below. (*Remember when adding clay you must score the slab and the letter to ensure they have adhered to each other*)
 - d. Once each student in the class has produced their words, have them play with the layout and arrangement so that it changes its meaning.



3. **Design a site specific artwork** about your own personal journey to or through a place. Observe, collect, compile, record visual, verbal and sensory information ideas from sources that are connected to this place or journey.
 - a. Include a map (ground level and an aerial view) of your location and experiences.
 - b. Find words/songs/stories that connect your own personal journey to this place.
 - c. Reference images and scenes from your chosen place/location that you might encounter everyday.
 - d. What is unique about it? Are there any hidden stories of this place?
4. **EXTENSION: Develop a collaborative site specific installation.**
 - a. Create a collage that incorporates visual images and text. Look at the poetry, songs, stories that inspired Gordon Young for his artwork '**Down To Earth**'. What words and stories would you use to reflect where you live or that inspires you? How do these words connect you with the history of your place?
 - b. Concept Development: Class discussion & ideas sketched in a large concept map.
 - c. Design Development: Refer to Gordon Young's design process. Consider how the site and materials will be connected to your text and place in Visual Arts diary
 - d. Develop a prototype or marquette of possible installation pieces.