

Words in Different Dimensions: An Art Installation

By Angela Mare

Lauriston Girls' School runs an innovative and exciting Arts Festival biennially where the school community celebrates the breadth and depth of creative and artistic talent at the school. It is a major event run over a number of weeks and involving all departments. After much discussion it was decided that for 2015 the Library, in collaboration with the English Department and the Lauriston FabLab, would showcase the creative writing talents of our students. Through the FabLab students were able to develop a fusion between the written word and technology.

In their unit of work on *Alice in Wonderland* Year 7 students were asked to think about poetry creatively and to move from writing their own poetry in a linear way to the presentation of ideas and poetry using other dimensions. The aim was to create a 3D model that would be a visual representation of a poem and that would bring the poetic ideas and words to life in an exciting way. While many students chose to construct their poems in simple 2D shapes such as Cheshire cats, teapots and hats, others tackled the more difficult task of presenting their poem in an innovative 3D model.



So how were these poems created and constructed? Students were required to think about the main idea of their poem and to consider an image or form that expressed this idea and a design that most effectively reflected what they were trying to convey. Students then used Adobe Illustrator as a CAD programme to create the final design. This was then engraved into plywood using a laser cutter in the FabLab. For simple 2D designs this was all that was required. The 3D designs required further assembly.

A unique creation was an installation model designed and made by Year 11 student Ella Shepard. Senior students were invited to participate in this exciting challenge and Ella's piece became the centrepiece of the exhibition and an example of what can be achieved when using the FabLab to transform ideas and words into unexpected and original forms. This installation not only expressed but enhanced Ella's poetic ideas.



Ella's installation was titled 'Cyclones' and consisted of simple spiral discs with the words of the poem engraved into the wood. The spirals became cyclones and the stanzas of the poems could be read as they spiralled up into the cone or, from above, as they receded down into the cone. Each cyclone was suspended in a way that allowed them to spin, imitating a naturally occurring cyclone. It was an impressive installation, even more remarkable because it was created in the student's spare time.



Ella's enthusiasm and her keenness to think imaginatively and 'outside the square' in her approach to poetry resulted in a visually exciting, lyrical and complex work of art. The FabLab engaged and challenged students to use their creative faculties in a variety of ways and provided a rich opportunity for learning, discovery and the interplay of imagination and technology.

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