

Artistically embracing nature

Sally Alden

Art offers children a natural form of self-expression allowing them to communicate feelings, ideas and imagination differently to any other medium.

Embracing this concept the Quirindi Pre School and Kindergarten welcomed contemporary artist Shona Wilson and Dr Sue Elliott Senior lecturer in the School of Education University New England on Tuesday to continue a week of 'Collaborations with Children' workshops with students offered by the Pre School.

Dr Sue Elliott has been engaged in education for sustainability advocacy and practice over many years in the early childhood field, while Shona Wilson's art works are represented by the ARTHOUSE Gallery in Darlinghurst Sydney, Shona has been working as a contemporary sculptor for 25 years and conveys a resounding respect for nature.

"I was invited back to the region, to share knowledge I have gleaned from 20 years of working with found natural materials. The workshops have morphed into collaborations with Children with Nature," said artist Shona.

This week, Shona offered bushwalking with different learning groups and educators from the Pre School to enable children to explore the natural world through the 'lens' of art-making.

"We created artworks that are site sensitive made only from materials found on location with no tools, except the children's own creativity."

The children's natural works were then photographed by Shona and the educators, with plans for them to be displayed at the upcoming Blackville Art Show.

The ongoing project has been embraced by the Pre School to assist children developing their physical, cognitive and

mental health and to encourage their love of nature.

"On my previous visit to the region in February of this year I found the area an extraordinarily beautiful place and since working with the Pre School I have delved further into the benefits of nature based creativity in assisting children's development," continued Shona.

Artist Shona feels strongly that everything we know and learn comes from the environment around us.

"Our environment is our background to understanding who we are and how we fit into the larger sphere of reality. Nature holds all the information of our known universe within and still maintains many secrets - so it's fundamental not only as a form of creative and artistic knowledge and understanding. Nature holds a world of wonderment."

Hiking hills and journeying through



Dr Sue Elliott, Senior lecturer in the School of Education at the University New England, Contemporary artist Shona Wilson and Director of Quirindi Pre School and Kindergarten, Alison Thompson at the Pre School on Tuesday as part of a week of 'Collaborations with Children' workshops. Photo by Sally Alden.

native scrub, the workshops enabled children time to connect with one-another, nature and time to collect natural objects like bones and bark for their

art making. Director of the Quirindi Pre School and Kindergarten Alison Thompson was delighted to welcome the creative professionals and offer

the workshop experience for the children.

"It has been a pleasure to have our guests, the children have gained so much from the workshops and we will

continue to offer opportunities to expand the creative and developmental growth of the children at the Pre School," concluded Alison.