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University News

Crossing Boundaries: The journey from teacher to teaching artist

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Purnima Ruanglerbutr, TAP exhibition curator and co-research assistant (holding flowers), standing with artists in Crossing Boundaries exhibition on display at the George Paton Gallery. Photo credit Danny Bach.

The Melbourne Graduate School of Education's graduates in Visual Art teaching have hosted the first Teacher as Art-maker Project (TAP) exhibition, *Crossing Boundaries*, at the George Paton Gallery.

The exhibition is the first in a series of annual exhibitions for Masters in Teaching (Secondary, Visual Art) graduates. More than 60 works produced by 27 teachers explore the journey from artist to teacher and the dual identity of the artist-teacher.

The project supports Master of Teaching (Secondary Art) graduates' art-making activities while teaching, acting as a professional development opportunity and an external support network.

This exhibition is one component of an extensive longitudinal research study, the "Teacher as Art-maker Project" (TAP), which is investigating how being an art practitioner as well as a teacher impacts long-term teacher retention and quality of teaching.

Lead researcher Dr Wesley Imms said the project and exhibition gave graduates a chance to apply what they learned as students.

"Through their works of art, the participants questioned their practice like they did during their training, and exposed themselves to continued examination and critique," he said.

As a graduate of the Master of Teaching (Secondary Art) program, TAP co-research assistant and exhibition curator Purnima Ruanglerbutr said she understood the struggle to maintain art production during the early years in teaching.

"Issues of time and space amidst busy school duties often thwart private art practices", she said.

"The TAP is an international first for visual art education, providing longitudinal data on teachers' participation in art production, perceptions of quality of teaching, and expectations of retention in the profession."

Most project participants revealed that teaching inspired their art making and believed their art production was integral to the quality of their teaching.

"This information will inform teacher training and professional development for future generations of art educators, help with advocacy for art education and improve collaboration between university teacher training institutions and professional organisations in developing support programs for newly graduated teachers," she said.

TAP is one of several research projects encouraged by MGSE that address post-training experiences of its graduates. Through this type of support, MGSE is actively refining and improving the content and delivery of its program, and providing on-going support for its graduates.

The exhibition continues until 16 November at George Paton Gallery, Level 2 Union House. For more information, visit <http://union.unimelb.edu.au/georgepaton/crossing-boundaries> (<http://union.unimelb.edu.au/georgepaton/crossing-boundaries>).

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