

The Big Draw the human body and three medical students.

There is a popular line of thought, that there is life before medical school, and there is life after getting into medical school. Not only do your working hours increase, and your free time starts to slowly disappear, your perspective on many things in life change. One particular aspect of that is how medical students look at the human body. We weren't aware of how much our perspectives had skewed after two years of medical school, prior to attending The Big Draw, an annual event held by the National Gallery of Australia, inviting people of all ages from the community to discover and experience the art of drawing. Despite knowing the human body's every contour and every muscle, we discovered on the day that we may not know that much about the human body after all.

In the pursuit of medical knowledge, it has been ingrained into our minds the distinctions between a healthy and diseased body. Wandering throughout the Gallery's sites displaying arts crossing geographical, cultural and chronological boundaries, we were reminded of the different viewpoint of the human body, not a physician's, but the artist's. We had to resist the urge to "diagnose" art pieces and truly engage and explore the value instilled in each piece.

In addition to engaging with the human body as depicted in the arts on a level distinct from that experienced in our medical education, we also learnt to explore the art of drawing by participating in the various events around the Gallery. Drawing is one of the primary ways in which people communicate with each other and express their feelings. With this in mind, we challenged the left hemisphere of our brain by drawing sculptures and live models. By having to really *look* at the body in front of us, we came to further appreciate the person within the body. The depiction of the human body for an artist may not be anatomically correct, but one that successfully invokes different feelings and emotions. Our interaction with the staff and local artists dotted around the Gallery enabled us to gain further insight into art and its reflection of the human spirit. This level of interaction heightened the gallery experience, forcing us to become active participants in art as opposed to passive observers.

Throughout the day we noticed how enthusiastically the community embraced and participated in the various events organized throughout the Gallery. It was an amazing array of artistic creativity by visitors, children and elderly alike. Any space was transformed into a blank canvas, the stairs, the floor and even the tables in the cafeteria. Visitors were able to interact with staff, local artists, and each other to explore and engage with the collection. And this is the primary aim of the Big Draw event, to teach people, not to draw, but to challenge their emotional capacity further. In this effect, the event successfully challenged the emotional capacity of three medical students, and we re-learnt to discover the wonders of the human body.

A response to The Big Draw community event on 20 September 2009 at the National Gallery of Australia- by Bella Nguyen, Hilman Tjiang and Duy Nguyen. (Second year medical students)