Presentation

Good morning everyone. Thank you Marie for the introduction and thank you so much for hosting me here at the Embassy and organising this wonderful morning tea. Now I have another item to add the long list of ways in which The Art Eloquence Prize has helped me in my career and nurtured my love for the visual arts.

It's actually quite funny to think of my experience with this prize because I could never have imagined when I submitted my 300 word thesis for the first round that it would lead to me being in Paris for a whole month and getting to meet with curators and other arts professionals in both Australia and France. But I think that is a testament to how special this prize really is. I don't know of any other opportunity for an emerging curator and art historian in Australia that would take them to Europe.

But before I get carried away talking about how much I love Paris, I should probably tell you all a bit more about the prize. The final for the prize was held at the National Gallery of Australia and the judging panel included the Senior curators of Australian and International art. Already, the five presenting students are given the opportunity to present at a national institution in front of industry professionals, which is another thing that I never thought happen during my undergraduate degree.

We were to present on the theme 'The Environment', a fitting and purposeful prompt that immediately sparked my interest. Everyone's presentations were thoughtful and meticulously crafted and probably edited within an inch of their life down to each word. It was actually a really close race between myself and second place and I don't know how the judges came to a decision, really, I didn't envy them. But I was so grateful to win and I believed a lot in the thesis I presented and still want to do more with the idea that I came up with for that presentation.

At first I had no idea what angle I was going to take on the theme. But then I went home, to my parents house, for the weekend and I saw sitting on the coffee table this book called *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information* by Edward Tufte published in 1983. My dad loves that book and would go on and on and on… And all us kids would go 'okay dad'. But

as I was staring at this book that looked at how quantitative information could be reinvented through design, I thought ‘ah, maybe dad has a point’.

So I wrote my presentation on the Australian Artist Bonita Ely and the French Artist Cathryn Boch and talked about how they both use cartographic elements in their work to politically and personally map environment. Ely photographed a journey along the edge of the Murray River in 1971 and then again thirty years later, so we witness with startling clarity the slow violence inflicted on this ecosystem. Boch paints, draws, dyes and stitches together many different types of maps into these quite violent but beautiful corporeal assemblages. So they both use the visual arts to reinvent cartographic data, and in doing so completely challenge how we think about mapping.

I honestly feel like directly after winning the prize my career or career pathway took such a dramatic turn upwards. One of the most amazing parts of this prize is that you get coffee with lots of industry professionals. As is often the case when a ‘coffee’ is proposed, it actually means that I had the opportunity to politely grill lots of curators about curating and writing and their own career pathways. I’m amazed at how generous people are with their time and their expertise. I’ve already learnt so much and I’m still about to meet with curators here from the Palais de Tokyo, Fondation Cartier and and Gaite Lyrique.

When you graduate from an Art History degree it can feel really daunting and as though you can’t see a path of opportunity. Now, I can see the path clearly and it feels exciting and like an adventure rather than a really long and difficult hike up a mountain. I have industry knowledge, new contacts in Australia and Paris, and I’ve met creatives of all kinds who I now consider my friends at Les Recollets, which I’m convinced is the best place ever to stay in Paris.

And there’s no better city to nurture one’s understanding and appreciation for art than in Paris. To finally see the paintings that you’ve only seen on a screen in real life is like magic. It’s safe to say that at the end of each day my feet are sore from walking through museums and I feel absolutely full of art.

So the Eloquence Prize really has changed my life. In terms of my future plans, I feel reinvigorated to curate more shows back in Australia when I return. I’m writing my honours

thesis on performance art, and here I've finally got to see some performance art (I went to the Pompidou for Le Nuit Blanche and was blown away), so my writing is improving. But ultimately, I've fallen in love with Paris and I want to one day return and work here, which is an ambition that I would never before have thought possible. So I'll improve my French skills and say see you soon rather than goodbye. Thank you so much again Marie and thank you to the Embassy for hosting this wonderful morning.