

Thinking critically and creatively at the Socratic Summit

Ten Year 10 students participated in the inaugural Socratic Summit in late August. This was a chance for Stage 5 students from a variety of schools to come together to think deeply about the philosophical branch of Aesthetics.

Students worked in small community of inquiry groups throughout the day to discuss questions such as, “What makes something a work of art?”, “Is taste always subjective?”, “Does an artwork created by an animal or by AI have the same value as an artwork created by a human?” and finally, “What role does art play in a good life?”.



Students had the chance to put into practice skills such as defining terminology, testing criteria, explaining competing values, offering justifications and agreeing and disagreeing respectfully. Well done to our students for the quality of their thinking and their engagement with others throughout the day.

Our philosophers shared their experience at the summit:

Iris, Gabriella and Simone: “The Socratic Summit was an immersive day and mentally stimulating. The day allowed us to expand our perspectives and reconsider our worldviews and relationship with the arts, which made our Tuesday much more philosophical! It was a unique experience, heightened by the input of students from a diverse range of schools and backgrounds. The challenging questions posed about subjectivity and objectivity, and the impact of art on life, invited rigorous discussion in a respectful and thoughtful manner. We also considered recent, more controversial topics, such as the commercialisation of art and the rise in AI-generated images, which was useful as young people in a rapidly developing world that often leaves many of us conflicted or unsure of the ethical considerations.”

Annie, Ashly C, Lisa and Jasmine: “We enjoyed the deep discussion and hearing different perspectives. It was interesting to explore ideas that we usually don’t spend much time pondering. Some of the most engaging discussion topics included what makes art ‘art’, subjectivity and objectivity in classifying art, art created by animals, like Piggasso, and exploring the idea of ‘intent’ in creating artistic expression.”

Olivia K, Ashley S and Amelia: “The Socratic Summit was an enlightening opportunity to engage in thoughtful discussion in a new environment. We particularly enjoyed hearing the different perspectives of our peers from schools across Sydney and the unique ideas they offered. A point of interest for us was grappling with the tension of valuing either the artist’s intent or the audience’s perception in defining whether something can be classified as art. We also enjoyed discussing the importance of art in the context of a ‘good life’.”

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