

Distinguished guest; Ladies and gentlemen; Boys and girls;
Welcome to Operation Art 2011 at the Art Gallery of NSW.
Ah, I never thought I would get to say that.

Today, I have been asked to speak to you about Operation Art and what it means to me.
Operation Art has been **part of my life since 2003** when I was just 5 years old. I knew very little about it back then but I still entered because I love art.

It was in 2004 when I was just 6 years old that I found out **first-hand what Operation Art is really all about**. That year I got chicken pox. But as my mum always says, "I had to do things a little bit differently'. My mild dose of chicken pox had some complications which led to **the** more serious condition of Deep Vein Thrombosis. After a short stay in my local hospital, I was transferred to The Children's Hospital at Westmead for more intensive care.

When I arrived, I was **taken straight to an isolation ward and I was confined to a single room for over a week and unable to walk**. My dad had already seen the artwork around the hospital and told me about it. As a surprise, he had also arranged for my Operation Artwork for that year to be collected and hung in my room to brighten it just a little. Eventually, I was taken out of my room for some blood tests and others checks on the other side of the hospital. This was to be my first chance to see the many art works hung on the walls around the hospital. **WOW, what an impact it had on me at that time.**

They were all so bright, colourful and amazing. I was feeling better almost straight away. Not only did I see the **art work from Operation Art, there were also pieces by some of Australia's best known artists** there as well. It was at this time that I made the decision that I wanted to have some of my own artwork hung on the walls at Westmead.

It didn't happen straight away, I entered Operation Art every year and eventually in 2006 one of my art pieces was selected to hang on the walls at The Children's Hospital. **Finally I achieved what I set out to do**. But the thrill for me did not stop there. My art work came here to the Art Gallery of NSW and went on display. I never thought I would have an artwork displayed here. That year, I also got to meet Monica Trappica who was my favourite presenter from Playschool.

Since then **my life has been further enriched by Operation Art**. 2011 will be the third time one of my artworks has been displayed on the walls at Westmead Children's Hospital. My art has also been selected for other locations and for the Teachers' Resource CD.

As a **result of entering Operation Art my artworks have been** printed in books, onto T shirts, on calendars, programs and promotional flyers. Operation Art has taken me to other hospitals where I assisted in the presentation of Operation Art works to the children's ward of those hospitals.

As a result of Operation Art, I was part of a major presentation at a **Department of Education Principals' Conference** and I also had the privilege of performing a solo vocal item at the **Sydney Opera House**.

One of the major highlights had to be meeting **Margaret Olley** and then also visiting her home studio. I will never forget that.

So **congratulation to all of you** who entered Operation Art and have had your artworks selected to be hung at The Children's Hospital at Westmead. It is such an honour. Your artwork will have a much larger impact than you will ever know. While you are at school and working away on your next artwork, think of the young boy or girl at The Children's Hospital who may be sick and not feeling well, that they will get to see your art works and even if they only feel a little bit better, your efforts will have been worthwhile. I am sure that those children will feel a whole lot better for being able to see such beautiful artworks as these ones hanging here today.

So, be proud that your artworks will go towards making a little sunshine where sometimes there is none.