Self-guided tour for Art Express students

PLEASE NOTE – all roads on campus are in use. When moving around the outside of the Female Orphan School be aware of vehicles. DO NOT STAND ON ROADS WHEN COMPLETING SKETCHING ACTIVITIES.
Location 1 – Standing at the steps leading up from the river.

An important place for the Darug people
Archaeological evidence indicates that Aboriginal occupation of lands in the Parramatta area occurred from at least 30,000 years ago. The merging of fresh and salt water in the Parramatta River, as well as the landscape of open plains provided many resources for the Darug people. The name Parramatta is thought to be derived from the Aboriginal word Barramattagal for 'place where the eels lie down' to breed (in Parramatta River).

The Darug Peoples survive to this day with populations in Parramatta, Greater Western Sydney, La Perouse and the Blue Mountains. There are a number of Darug Organisations and advisory committees that include active Darug peoples, as well as prominent Darug artists.

Shell middens found on the banks of the Parramatta River were used as a resource for the construction of the Female Orphan School, as they were crushed and combined with other ingredients to make mortar.
**Farmland**
The Europeans settled Parramatta late in 1788, naming it Rose Hill. A military barracks and hospital was set up as well as convict huts and areas for farming. In 1791 the area was renamed Parramatta. Surgeon Thomas Arndell was granted 60 acres of land on the north side of the river and called the land Arthur’s Hill. He had settled the land, and planted several crops when bushfires in 1792 destroyed all his buildings and produce. He exchanged his land in Parramatta for land in the Hawkesbury and Arthur’s Hill was taken over by the Government to provide produce for the Female Orphan School in Sydney.

*Location 2 – Looking at the Front of the building.*

**Governor and Elizabeth Macquarie & the Female Orphan School**
When Governor Macquarie arrived in Sydney, the Female Orphan School was overcrowded. Macquarie soon chose the Arthur’s Hill site as the new location for the School and in 1813 building began on an impressive three-storey structure. Early designs for the building have not been found, and it is quite possible that Elizabeth Macquarie was responsible for the design. The building is closely modelled on her childhood home of Airds in Scotland.

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*Airds House, Argyll, Scotland*
ACTIVITY

- Compare the images of Airds House (above), and the Female Orphan School by Joseph Lycett (below), with the built structure. Sketch the building noting where the differences between the historical images and the present building are.
- Do you think Lycett made an accurate representation of the building? Why or why not?
Location 3 – Near building ET (Medical Superintendent’s House)

Female Orphan School 1818-1850 / Protestant Orphan School 1850-1887
Shortly after the first girls arrived at the school extensions and alterations to the building were made to accommodate the occupants and their needs. The site underwent many changes during its time as a school with several additions to the original building as well as other buildings being added to the site. The Orphan School looked after boys as well as girls from 1850.

ACTIVITY

• Consider the images below and note how the building and site changes over time. Choose a modern view similar to one of those below and sketch the building as it now stands, comparing it to the historical image.
The Female Orphan School around 1825, by Augustus Earle (National Library of Australia nla.pic-an2818336)

Female Orphan School, Parramatta, after 1861, by F.A. Montague (State Library of New South Wales, ML 703)
The Protestant Orphan School between 1870 and 80, view from the south east. (State Library of New South Wales, Government Printing Office 1 – 06131)

The Protestant Orphan School between 1870 and 1875, with Martha Betts in the foreground (State Library of New South Wales SPF / 2661)
**Location 4 – Inside entrance foyer**

During restoration of the building, original paint colours and stencils were uncovered. These hints of the different periods of this building’s history are an important part of the story and of understanding how the building would have looked as a grand statement of colonial government attitudes. The stencilling shows the building would have been very impressive and was designed to impress the patrons who donated money and time to ensure the school could operate.

**ACTIVITY**

- Using the stencilling evident in the entrance foyer as inspiration, design a pattern for a stencil that might be used in a grand colonial building.
  - **EXTENSION ACTIVITY** – research popular wall coverings from the 19th century and design a wallpaper or border that is a modern interpretation of these. (Caroline Simpson Library and Research Collection have several examples - [http://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/research-collections/library](http://sydneylivingmuseums.com.au/research-collections/library))

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**Location 5 – first floor landing.**

**Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital 1888-1986**

In 1887 the Protestant Orphan School was closed and in 1888 this site became the Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital. Considerable change was made to the building during this time, including the introduction of basic bathroom facilities. The central stairway was removed and landings put in, as well as windows being cut through some internal walls. The sinks and shower recess on this floor are from this time. Note in the shower recess the stencil number, these are found throughout the building and are part of the early history of the Psychiatric Hospital.

Other changes from this time also include the brick entry porch and the stone balustrades on the linking passages.

In the late 19th Century, part of the treatment of mental health patients focussed on providing a pleasant atmosphere for the patients, with the belief that ‘good surroundings, work and religion’ were part of the cure. Hospital gardens, farms and animal enclosures were provided to amuse and occupy patients.
ACTIVITY

The image below shows the landscaping of the gardens between the building and the river. Compare this to other historical views and the current landscape.

Rydalmere Psychiatric Hospital, around 1920 (Garth McGill Collection)

- Sketch the current view from the first floor, making note of similarities and differences.
  - EXTENSION ACTIVITY – using your previous sketch of the Female Orphan School as it is now, create a new landscape design based on the ideal of a pleasant atmosphere that will amuse and occupy visitors.
Location 6 – Back courtyard (outside Visitor Information Centre)

Restoration and repair 1995-2014

After the closure of the Psychiatric Hospital in 1985, the site was abandoned and fell into disrepair. In 1995, the New South Wales government transferred the site to the University of Western Sydney to use as its Parramatta campus. In 2000, a three-stage restoration project began. The interiors and exteriors were painstakingly restored and by 2013, the building was fully restored for use as a public exhibition space and permanent home for the Whitlam Institute.

ACTIVITY

Compare the image taken by the architects prior to restoration with the building as it now stands. Sketch the same view, showing how the building now looks and note the features restored and repaired as part of the restoration process.

The northern face of the central building prior to restoration (Tanner and Associates Architects)