

a UK interest in science is being spread worldwide, and **Tony Dawe** talks to students decorating communities

# Art that reaches everyone

HILLS ROAD SIXTH FORM COLLEGE  
Community Partnership

**M**atthew Watson, a 17-year-old A-level student, has an important date at Buckingham Palace today. He will be one of five past and present students of Hills Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge, watching Rob Wilkinson, the principal, collect a Queen's Anniversary Prize for a community partnership in art and design.

Watson's biggest day, however, will come when a 7ft-by-16ft mural which he is painting will be unveiled at Addenbrookes Hospital. Depicting toy figures and animals looking out from a

pirate ship on to a brilliantly coloured world of snow, jungle and famous sights, the mural will brighten the wall of a children's area in the allergy clinic.

His work is typical of dozens of pieces by college students that adorn schools, Cambridge railway station, public spaces and the hospital. "I did some observational drawings of toys in my AS year, and when this commission came up the college asked if I would like to do it," he says.

Toys and her own collection of dolls from different countries were an inspiration for Grace Thomas, who created an 8ft-by-12ft mural for the playground of



Hills Road student Grace Thomas working on the mural she created for the playground of a local primary school

a primary school in the Romsey district of the city while a student at the college. She depicted toys from different countries leaping out of a toy box to complement the school's mix of pupils from 13 countries who speak a total of 16 languages.

Sarah Fogel, another talented student still at the college, will be joining Watson at the Palace today following her commission to make sculptures for the Cambridge Cycleway, part of the national bicycle network.

Her sculpture of a hare so impressed Christine Poppie, whose son was killed while cycling on the roads, that a pair of them have been cast in bronze as a memorial.

The college's influence on the cycleway, which includes designs by Malcolm Greenhill, also an A-level student at Hills Road, arises from its two-way relationship with the community. For while students' work is to be seen in and around the city, professionals in the community give their time to working in and around the college.

Jamie Buchanan, for example, has twice been the architect in residence. One of his recent commissions was to landscape the cycleway, so he encouraged students to participate.

His greatest influence, however, is an elegant wood and glass conservatory designed with the help of students which serves as an exhibition centre, space for public events and bolt-hole for teachers in quiet times.

The college has had an architect in residence for 20 years and artists in residence, including photographers, printmakers, textile and computer specialists, for the past 12. They lecture, advise and work alongside the 300 students doing A and AS-level courses. "Some are former students who want to give something back to the college," says Ted Coney, head of art and design. "But I never feel shy in asking others because I am not doing it for myself but for the students. I love to see them involved in the community, watch them dealing with architects and professional

people on the cycleway project. It forces them to take control and gives them confidence."

He adds that one of the greatest things about receiving a Queen's Prize is that it makes his colleagues be nice to him and his department. "They are

always moaning about us because we make a mess and want to take over half the college for exhibitions, but, for once, they cannot grumble."

Dr Wilkinson says the award is a tribute to the "extraordinary leadership" shown by Co-

ney. "It reflects the art department's work and also the ethos of the college, with former students and parents coming to help and 3,000 adults taking evening or short courses every year, while we reach out to the community."

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