

# A Creative Year Ahead

ANNE DROUET joined CDNIS in August as Director of Visual and Performing Arts; here she shares some of the exciting things happening at the school in 2023.

## Tell us a bit about yourself and your background in the arts and in teaching.

I've been teaching music and performing arts in local UK schools (including the BRIT School of Performing & Creative Arts who boast alumni such as Adele, Jessie J and Tom Holland) and internationally since the 1990s.

As a freelance workshop leader and artistic director for the International Schools Theatre Association (ISTA), I have collaborated with interdisciplinary creatives in arts festivals across four continents, and as a composer, my clients include Weinstein Films, the International Labour Organization and the Arts Council, UK. I'm the founder of the International Schools Theatre Association, ISTA Performing Arts Academy that welcomes like-minded young people from all over Southeast Asia to come together, collaborate, explore and create original work.

## How has your industry experience helped you as an educator?

I've been lucky to have made wonderful connections with amazingly talented and generous people. In the past, my students have been inspired in workshops and masterclasses by a variety of award-winning talents such as musician, composer and arranger John Altman; Andy Summers (The Police) and Morris Hayes (Prince and the NPG). It is so empowering for students to hear they're talented from industry experts of this kind of calibre!



## Have you been busy since joining the CDNIS team?

The arts are a strategic priority at the school, and there has been so much support, trust and freedom for me to dream new possibilities as well as to celebrate what's already happening in the curricular and extracurricular programme.

So far, we have welcomed local talent as artists-in-residence to work with students from EY to Grade 12, our faculty and our parents. The range of cultural contexts has been really varied, including contemporary Chinese ink masters, a Chinese puppet master with 50 years' experience, several professional musicians, a puppet theatre company focused on wellbeing, a world class conductor and a theatre director. In addition to numerous learning celebrations on the stage and in exhibitions, we also put on a full scale musical, a play, a winter concert and a Lunar New Year extravaganza.

## What would you say are key aspects of teaching visual and performing arts to students?

I'd say that curiosity, care, playfulness and an open mind are key qualities. Knowing the purpose of why we do what we do is really important. The arts are what makes us human, giving us a language to express our feelings and ideas while helping us understand the world around us and our place within it. A vibrant arts programme also offers the great potential to bring the community together for a shared, joyful experience.





**We hear there's a new art project starting at the school after Lunar New Year.**

Yes, we have a really exciting whole school community art project like no other happening in March! Jo Di Bona, often known as the Andy Warhol of Street Art and founder of "Pop Graffiti", has been tasked to capture our school values in art and will be delighting us over 10 days as he paints his masterpiece on a 70-square-metre wall in the very heart of our campus.

The community was surveyed back in October with questions such as, "When you think of CDNIS, what are some memories, images or words that come to mind?" The results were heartwarming indeed, with caring, compassionate, inspirational, connectedness and global understanding as some of the most popular results.

Jo Di Bona will also be working with our visual art teachers and students across the whole school to share his creative processes. But what makes this project so

**CDNIS in 2023**

Along with the Jo Di Bona collaboration, Anne says the school has lots of exciting projects in the pipeline this year. She outlines a few of them here.

*Community Outreach Mural with Grade 5 students*

"Working with Keenable Creations, a local charitable organisation established in 2009 offering training to budding disabled artists, our Grade 5 students will work side by side to capture their hopes and dreams around sharing our planet on a large-scale mural."

*Film Festival*

"We are holding our first film festival for CDNIS's budding filmmakers. The top prize is the chance to get feedback from 33-time nominated and two-time Academy Award winner Neil Corbould (*Gravity*, *Gladiator*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Rogue One*). We hope this will be an inspirational opportunity for all involved."

*ISTA Arts Academy*

Working with the International Schools Theatre Association, we're launching the Arts Academy on 18 March, and welcome our new Patron, Alex Clifton, who is the Director of Live Entertainment and Costuming at Disneyland, Hong Kong! Our first project will be a theatre festival to devise a short performance to open the Hong Kong Sustainable Development Goals Summit at CDNIS on 25 March.

unique is the digital citizenship component. With the help of Jo Di Bona and two key members of the CDNIS community, we'll be launching a programme to educate our community about everything everyone should know about web 3.0! Yes, CDNIS plans to launch our first NFT and teach all parents and students who'd like to know how to mint their own NFT too and build our own community on the CDNIS metaverse!

**What are some of your favourite art/performance spaces in HK?**

There are so many more spaces in Hong Kong than one might first realise. From West Kowloon to the Cultural Centre, there are also smaller venues and streets where freelance and independent artists and performers can surprise and inspire you.

**Is there anything else that you regard as being unique to the arts at CDNIS?**

Yes, we have an amazing Community Choir that welcomes high school students and any adult in our community, including staff, parents and alumni! We're joined by a passion for singing and there is even a hope to perform at an a cappella concert next year at Carnegie Hall, New York. Our mission is to spread joy through the gift of music, so if you're reading this and you'd like to book us for an event, please get in touch. If you're planning a charity fundraiser, we'd love to help! [a](#)

The Canadian International School of Hong Kong is at 36 Nam Long Shan Road, Aberdeen. For more information about the school's arts programmes and projects, you can email [annedrouet@cdnis.edu.hk](mailto:annedrouet@cdnis.edu.hk) or visit [cdnis.edu.hk](http://cdnis.edu.hk).