RUNNING THE NUMBERS

If you’re teaching about the environment, sustainability, consumerism or demographics, or maybe visual arts or even statistics, the work of artist Chris Jordan could be just what you’re looking for. Jordan’s aim, as he explains, is to visualise the vastness of consumerism that is so enormous as to be nearly incomprehensible. ‘Paper Cups, 2008,’ for example, depicts 410,000 paper cups, equal to the number of disposable hot-beverage paper cups used in the United States every 15 minutes. ‘Plastic Bottles, 2007’ depicts two million plastic beverage bottles, the number used in the US every five minutes. The very clever ‘Cans Seurat, 2007,’ above, uses 106,000 aluminium cans, the number used in the US every 30 seconds, in a homage to Georges-Pierre Seurat’s neo-impressionist ‘Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte.’ According to Jordan, who maintains the artworks on a website called ‘Running the Numbers: An American self-portrait’ – www.chrisjordan.com – the works are best seen in person because their size really hits home, unlike ‘these little web images.’ ‘Running the Numbers’ is a work in progress, and new images will be posted as they are completed, so Jordan welcomes return visitors.

SKY’S THE LIMIT

When young first-time filmmakers, some as young as 14 years, from Participate Film Academy made their first full-length feature film, Green Fire Envy, their ambition was to have a single screening for their family and friends. A chance article in the local newspapers in Liverpool, Sydney, however, led Hoyts’ national film programmer, Marina Vidakovic, to the school. She saw their film trailer, and suggested Hoyts Cinemas could premiere the film, and sponsor Participate Film Academy. Green Fire Envy premiered in March in Sydney’s inner east at Hoyts Entertainment Quarter in Moore Park, with a seven day limited release at Hoyts Wetherill Park in Sydney’s outer south west.

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

A musical genius is born not made, right? Wrong, according to the February edition of New Scientist magazine. Brain scan research by Elizabeth Margulis and colleagues at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville has found that specific regions of the brain dedicated to musical syntax and timbre are more animated when musicians hear recordings of their own type of instrument than other instruments. If musicality were entirely genetic, the researchers argue, the brain activity would be similar in all musicians, regardless of the instrument they hear, which means musicians do have a different brain, but they weren’t born that way, they developed that brain by playing particular instruments.

For the full research paper visit www.soc.northwestern.edu/wong/HBM2.pdf

PAWS FOR THOUGHT

The RSPCA’s annual Million Paws Walk is on next month – Sunday 18 May – and with more than 70 locations across Australia, it’s a great way for you and your students to support the work of the RSPCA and get a little exercise in the process! You don’t need to bring a pet to join in. Visit www.millionpawswalk.com.au for location details.

This month’s Grapevine is by Steve Holden, Editor of Teacher.