I remember vividly watching a video on computer graphics which was utilised for advertising about seven years ago, and feeling the surge of excitement run through my veins, and the desire to want to know all, now. It wasn't until I had completed my first course in computer graphics at the Hawthorn Institute in Victoria, that I realised that it was impossible for me or my students to achieve such fantastic results, because the cost of computers used by the artists was prohibitive. Undaunted, and still determined to find a suitable program, I blundered my way through a few more courses, until the little 'Mac' face smiled sweetly at me, and I smiled back. I was at last recognising the programs and my brain and hands were coordinating. My beginnings as a student of computer graphics has remained with me as a teacher, because I can truly relate to the frustrations of my students, and restrain them from throwing the mouse out the window. The imaginative prowess. The 'Mac' I find is particularly user-friendly, and is suitable for a variety of courses across the curriculum, and hence is also budget-friendly. I find the use of windows very easy, rather than trying to remember which key to strike to access various aspects of different programs on the 'DOS' machines, hence I love the 'Mac'.

The programs in graphics are suitable for a wide range of age groups, ranging from 2 year-olds to top class graphic artists. At Annesley College, the school where I teach, students mainly use a variety of graphic drawing programs. These are presented to the students as a means to achieve a higher standard in graphic skills rather than pencil rendering, and in many cases repetitive design drawing. The computer is used as another drawing tool; just as one would change from a pencil to charcoal, or pastel, the 'Mac' allows for another form of expression. It is another medium to end. Students are still required to display drawing skills and an understanding of the features involved and composition. The print-out is not necessarily the finished product. In many cases it is the beginnings of the main project. Designs can be used for fabric printing using the newly developed Risograph printing method. This method involves using a carbon-based printout from either a laser printer or a photocopier, and then running the print and Risograph paper through a Risograph screen which 'burns' out the line work and produces a stencil ready for screen printing. Other designs can be used as cut stencils for T-shirts, or as tracings for silk paintings. The possibilities are endless. Lettering programs allow students to reproduce graphic communication designs of a very high quality, without jeopardising creativity. I bet many art teachers reading this have often thought that many students' work has been spoilt through poor quality lettering. Not any more! By photocopied onto a clear transparency, lettering can be created in a multitude of formats and fonts, and simply laid over the top of the design, which has either been created on the computer or drawn freehand using traditional rendering methods.

Freehand drawings or photographs can also be included in the art work using a scanner, and integrated with the lettering. Depending on the standard and level of the students, the scanner also has a wide variety of uses. One project which the students really enjoy is to scan in a photograph of themselves, and manipulate the image on the screen, using a paint program. The image can be distorted, or moustaches etc. drawn on. The lettering is then added to create either a humorous 'wanted' poster or a funtioned personalised business card.

There is such a wide scope for creativity, and the students learn to combine a variety of techniques into an enjoyable artistic experience using computer graphics. Another exercise using video techniques was to paint and photograph a specialist still life, and then manipulate the image to produce a whole new picture. The results were fascinating. The tonal qualities and dot sizes were modified, and various printouts were photocopied onto production transparencies. These were then set into consecutive overlay positions to give a 3-dimensional effect. The next step was to do this in colour. The experiments continued using glue on plastic, powder stuck on glass, thick impasto applied with the fingers etc. The printouts were really exciting, and the final product was a combination of the laser printer, photocopier and photographic silk screen. The computer is not restrictive. It can be a wonderful beginning to a whole new world in creative technology.

Another exciting technological facility which enhanced the print-out was to use a Canon Colour Laser Copier. On a recent excursion to the Victorian Arts Centre, we were fortunate to meet Bashir Baraki, an artist who has spent considerable time researching the artistic use of CLC. His intention was to explore the possibilities of an inter-marriage between traditional means of expression and technology. This search for the new provided Baraki with an exciting new concept in laser art work, which we eagerly grasped at to provide a new means of expression to the computer print-out.

Computer graphics can be as restrictive as one desires or as wildly creative as Jackson Pollock's. The colour printers have a wonderful resolution and the finish is of an extremely high quality. I guarantee that your students will be ecstatic with their results. Don't forget also that photocopiers can repeat and enlarge colour prints to give poster size products.

After many years of using the Macintosh, I am still learning. Every time I think I am getting somewhere, a new product hits the market, which is more exciting than the last. This is why computer graphics is such an exciting area in which to be involved, and I am looking forward to it as an art teacher looking for a new trend in which I can be of any assistance. I would be more than happy to help.