

GLASS, OCHRE, IRON AND MUD

EDUCATION RESOURCE
VCE ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING
AND VCE CREATIVE PRACTICE



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY
Art Gallery

Deakin University CRICOS Provider Code: 00113B



50
YEARS

GLASS, OCHRE, IRON AND MUD

Anindita Banerjee, Deanne Gilson, Aaron Hoffman and Todd Johnson

Glass, ochre, iron and mud represents the tenth collaborative exhibition between the Deakin University Art Gallery and the School of Communication and Creative Arts. This showcase features four accomplished alumni from the Higher Degree by Research program including: Anindita Banerjee, Deanne Gilson, Aaron Hoffman, and Todd Johnson. The four distinguished artists have been invited to present current projects, reflecting the diverse perspectives emerging from Deakin's creative research community. While their approaches and inquiries have developed independently over the last four years, the exhibition reveals the artists' shared exploration of the complexities of contemporary identity, material knowledges and understandings of place.

James Lynch
Curator, Art Collection and Galleries
Deakin University

Glossary/ Terminology/ Descriptions:

Higher Degree by Research

A Higher Degree by Research (HDR) is an advanced tertiary degree that primarily focuses on research rather than coursework. It involves a significant contribution to knowledge in a specific field of study and is typically pursued after completing an undergraduate or master's degree.

Alumni

Alumni refers to the graduates or former students of a particular school, college, or university.

Bogong Moth

The Bogong Moth (*Agrotis infusa*) is a species of nocturnal moth found in Australia, known for its remarkable migratory behaviour. These moths are notable for their large size and distinctive appearance, with a wingspan of up to 4 cm and greyish-brown wings adorned with darker markings.

Materiality (in art and design)

The significance of materials and the way they are used in artistic works (including texture and weight) and how their use influences the way the audience views the work.

Manifest (as a verb)

To bring an idea into reality.

Impermanence

Impermanence refers to the state or quality of being temporary or not lasting forever. It signifies change, transience, or the inevitability of things coming to an end.

Todd Johnson
3 days, 7 hours 2024 (detail)
archival inkjet print, framed
image © copyright and courtesy of the artist

GLASS, OCHRE, IRON AND MUD

Anindita Banerjee, Deanne Gilson, Aaron Hoffman and Todd Johnson

Exploring the Exhibition

Take some time to wander through the exhibition and consider the following ideas:

The curator James Lynch has selected four Deakin alumni artists for this exhibition.

Looking at the exhibition and the artworks – are there any connections, similarities, comparisons and/ or differences you can see?

As the title of the exhibition suggests, the artworks depict, refer to and include a variety of elements and materials - glass, ochre, iron and mud. Can you match the materials with the work it might be referring to?

Can you describe how these elements appear and are used in the artwork?

What artistic mediums are used in this exhibition? And why have certain artists chosen to use these mediums?

Choose a group of works by one of the artists. Imagine that work is its own distinct exhibition. Create an exhibition title and sentence to describe that group of works.

Write down the first ten descriptive words that come to you as you view this group of works:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

VCE ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING

[See End Notes for Curriculum links](#)
[VCE Art Making and Exhibiting](#)

Choose one artwork and consider the following questions as they relate to that work in particular:

Art Making Practice

What do you think motivated the artist to create these works in this way?

Describe how the art elements and principles eg. colour, line, texture and form appear in the work?.

Do the artists use any recognisable symbols in these works?

Choose one artwork and describe the various techniques that might have been used to create this work?

Are there obvious influences or inspiration for the work? How are these incorporated into the artist's own ideas?

Exhibiting the Works

Are there any obvious connections between all the works in the show that you think the curator considered when bringing these artists together other than the fact they are all Deakin Higher Degree by Research alumni?

Are there any other themes that connect the work?

Describe how the curator has chosen to arrange the works in the exhibition. How has the gallery space been used to showcase the work of each artist?

Does the way the works have been arranged effect the way we make meaning from the work?

Assume you have been tasked with curating the exhibition and money is no object! How would you choose to display the work? What things would you potentially do differently and why?

VCE ART CREATIVE PRACTICE

[See End Notes for Curriculum links](#)
[VCE Art Making and Exhibiting](#)

The Structural Lenses from the VCAA Creative Practice Study Design:

The Structural Lens

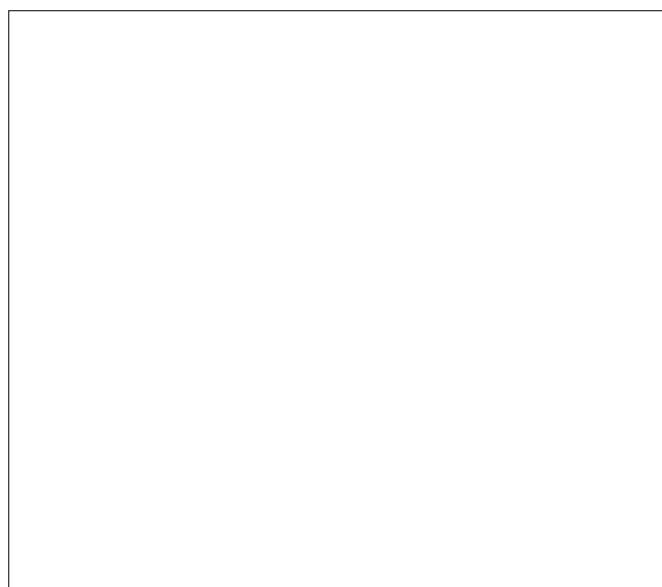
The Structural Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork, and its relationship with the artist and viewer or audience, through the investigation of the use of art elements and art principles, and the application of materials, techniques and processes. It also considers the stylistic qualities and symbolism evident in the artwork, and the context in which artists work and in which artworks are presented or viewed. The Structural Lens can inform the other lenses.

The Personal Lens

The Personal Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork through the investigation of the personal feelings, beliefs and life experiences of the artist. The evaluation and interpretation of an artwork can be influenced by the life experiences, personal feelings and beliefs of the viewer or audience and the context in which artists work and in which artworks are presented or viewed.

The Cultural Lens

The Cultural Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork through the investigation of social, historical and cultural influences and representations. This includes the influence of the time and place in which the artwork is made, presented or viewed, as well as the social, historical, political, philosophical and economic influences on the practices of the artist, and how these are reflected in the artwork.



Complete a quick sketch of the work you have chosen

Artist _____

Title _____

Consider the exhibition and the works featured using the Interpretive Lenses:

Choose an artwork and answer the following questions about the work:

Consider it from a **structural perspective**. Why might the artist have chosen to use certain **materials, techniques and processes** to create the work?

Consider it from the artist's **personal perspective**. What does the work share about the life or concerns of the artist? How are the artist's own **personal experiences and/ or viewpoints** explored through the work?

Think about the work from a **cultural perspective**. What does the work tell us about the world the artist lives in, the **community or society** they are a part of? How do you think the artist is addressing concerns that they see reflected in the society or communities around them?

How has the artist used **visual language** to communicate their ideas? Are there any familiar features to the work? Are there **symbolic features** in the work? Are there parts of the work that the artist is using to represent something other than what you can see?

WORKS IN FOCUS



Deanne Gilson

The Last Bogong Moth Feast 2023

22 gold carat leaf, acrylic and yellow ochre sourced from Wadawurrung Dja on canvas

150 x 130cm

© courtesy of the artist

As you view the work - think about the following statement by the artist Deanne Gilson:

Aboriginal Dreaming and Spirituality precede Western religion, time, art genres and everything that is living is based on the stories of spirit and Dreaming. For me it over rides western ways of things. The notion that all things are connected transcends many religions through reincarnation and the that we are connected to the land, plants, animals and layers of Country, that is why we must take care of them as if they are all family, like the Bogong Moth.

Reflecting on Gilson's words, how do you see yourself connected to your environment and other living things? How do you understand that Dreaming and Spirituality guides and connects First Peoples?

'My painting, The Last Bogong Moth Feast depicts men, women and children catching moths and cooking them on a fire, in front of a cave. I am telling this story because the Bogong Moth is now on the endangered species list and I want the future generations of children to know about them. They were a main food source for my ancestors and we used to feast on them. We need to take better care of our environment. the land and all that lives and grows on this Country before it's all gone.'

Deanne Gilson

Dr Deanne Gilson is a proud Wadawurrung woman and an artist living and creating from her ancestral home in Ballarat, Victoria. Gilson first studied a Bachelor of Fine Art with Honours from Federation University in 2015. After further studies in education, Gilson completed a Master of Fine Art by Research, directly followed by a PhD from Deakin University in 2021.

Gilson's extensive artistic career encompasses ceramics, textiles, fibre arts and public installations, with her recent works focusing on painting. Through her creative practice, Gilson examines how colonialism has disrupted familial and ancestral connections to Country. For Gilson contemporary art is a platform that can incorporate Traditional Knowledge to create spaces for acceptance and healing while reasserting Wadawurrung cultural identity.

Although resembling European painting genres such as still life, Gilson defines her images as reclamations of Aboriginal practices through their symbolic, material and spiritual connection to Country and as a continuation of Women's business¹.

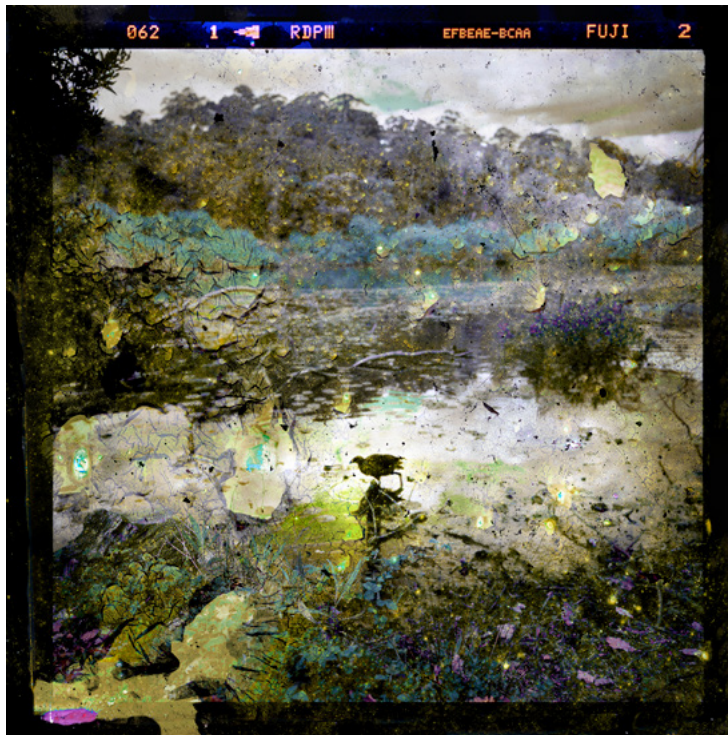
Describe what you see in Deanne Gilson's painting *The Last Bogong Moth Feast*.

Describe how each element you identified appears in the *The Last Bogong Moth Feast* artwork and contributes to the story of how First Peoples utilised the moth.

Describe how you think art can change the way we feel about the environment.

1. Estelle Barrett, Resisting Beauty in The Work of Deanne Gilson, catalogue essay, Daine Singer Gallery, Melbourne and online, 2023 <https://www.dainesinger.com/deanne-gilson-estelle-barrett-essay> [Accessed 19.03.25]

WORKS IN FOCUS



Todd Johnson

1 week, 2 days, 12 hours (Walker Swap) 2025

archival inkjet print, framed

85cm x 85cm

© courtesy of the artist

This sequence of photographs explores the slow violence of environmental decay by allowing the landscape to imprint itself onto film, both visually and physically. Each photograph undergoes a transformative process: buried, submersion in lake water, or fused with site-specific detritus and pollution, mirroring the degradation of the environments themselves. Existing in a state of both erasure and emergence, the images speak to cycles of destruction, memory, and time's 'relentless melt'. By surrendering control to the elements, the work invites reflection on impermanence and the ways in which place shapes perception, material, and history. Ultimately, this sequence of photographs examines the fragile relationship between analogue technology and the natural world, revealing their shared vulnerabilities in an era of environmental instability.

Todd Johnson

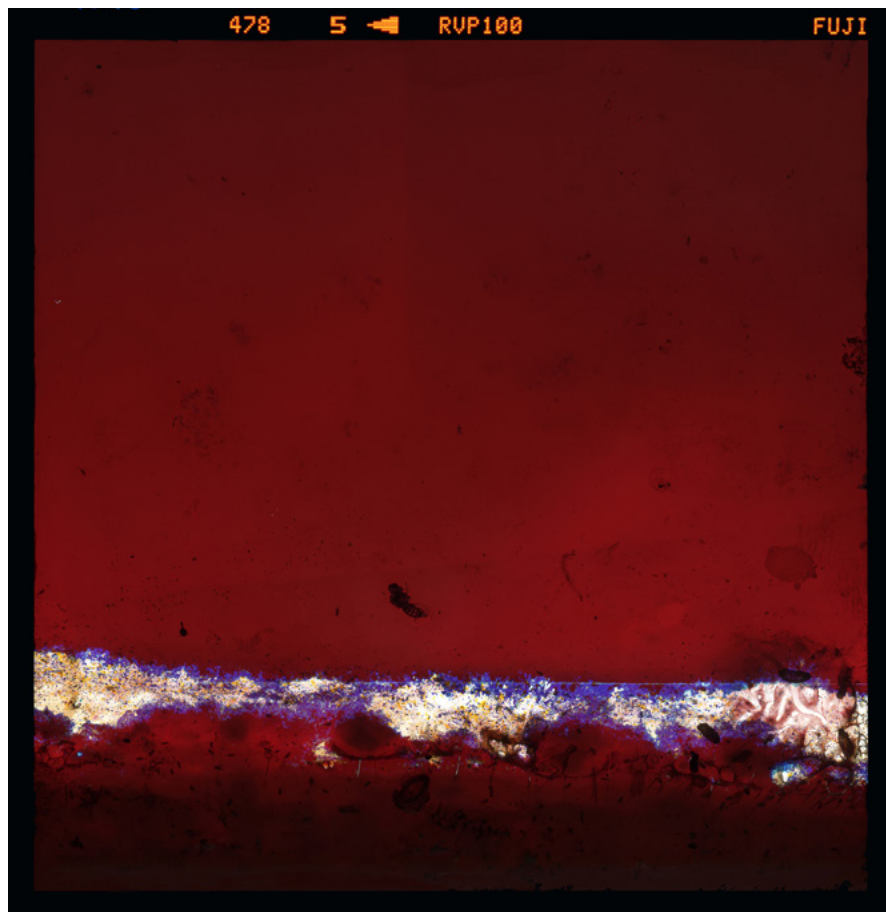
Dr Todd Johnson is an artist and lecturer who investigates the materiality of photographic images and their relationships with place. His photographs result from a physical exchange between the camera, transparency film and elements of the environment. After completing an undergraduate degree in photography Johnson completed his PhD studies at Deakin University in 2022.

Johnson's photograph *1 week, 2 days, 12 hours (Walker Swap)*, was created in 2025 on the traditional lands of the Dja Wurrung people near Geriward in central west Victoria. Returning to the location the photograph was originally taken Johnson submerged the negative for eight and half days in the mud. This process transformed the image through natural deterioration, incorporating colour changes, chemical reactions, alterations, chemical interactions, abrasions and dirt from Country and the land itself. Johnson's approach demonstrates that photography isn't merely representational but participates in natural cycles of change. By burying or submerging his film in the same locations where the images were originally captured, he creates richly textured visual connections between place, the impermanence of imagery, and the physical interaction of materials and the environs in the real world.

Describe what you see in Todd Johnson's work *1 week, 2 days, 12 hours (Walker Swap)*.

Describe how the environment has impacted the way the work looks.

What does the overall impact of the work have on how you feel about the work, compared to if it was just a 'normal' photographic print without all the degradation?



Todd Johnson

Film transparency buried for 6 months, 3 weeks, 2 days 2017
archival inkjet print, framed
85cm x 85cm
© courtesy of the artist

Links to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Art Making and Exhibiting

Including but not limited to...

Unit 1:

Explore, expand, investigate

Area of Study 3 – Investigate – research and present

What role do artworks and their presentation play in society?

Outcome 3

Key knowledge

- the influence of context on the practices of Australian artists and their artworks
- characteristics and properties of materials used by artists to make artworks
- ways in which artists apply materials in the making of artworks
- ways in which artists use techniques and processes to make artworks
- how artists represent ideas and use subject matter to communicate meaning in artworks
- strategies used to create a cohesive presentation about artists and their artworks
- ways to discuss artworks and art forms on display
- strategies used to prepare information for the exhibition of artworks
- appropriate terminology used to discuss artworks and exhibitions

Key skills

- explore and discuss the contexts of a range of Australian artists and their artworks

- use a range of resources to research how artists have used materials, techniques and processes in the making of their artworks
- explain and evaluate how artists have used materials, techniques and processes to make artworks
- analyse how artists represent ideas and use subject matter to communicate meaning in their artworks
- use a variety of methods and strategies to present information for a proposed exhibition of artworks by Australian artists
- develop and present information discussing a range of artworks by Australian artists
- use appropriate terminology in the discussion of artworks and their presentation

Unit 2:

Understand, develop and resolve

Area of Study 1 – How are thematic exhibitions planned and designed?

Outcome 1

Key knowledge

- background information about artists and artworks
- the ways artworks in an exhibition have been selected for display
- the influence of contexts on the representation of subject matter and the communication of meaning in artworks
- connections between artworks in a thematic exhibition
- strategies used to exhibit artworks from different contexts in a thematic exhibition, including ways to select and form relationships between artworks in the exhibition
- processes used to document the design of an exhibition in their Visual Arts journal
- use of appropriate art terminology in the presentation and evaluation of artworks

Key skills

- use a range of resources to investigate information about artists and artworks
- justify the selection of artworks for a thematic exhibition
- identify and analyse the influence of contexts on the representation of subject matter and ideas to communicate meaning in artworks
- explain the connections between artworks in a thematic exhibition
- discuss the ways in which artworks from different contexts are exhibited in a thematic exhibition
- research and select artworks to design a thematic exhibition
- explore a thematic exhibition and then design a thematic exhibition for an audience
- develop and present information about a range of artworks in a thematic exhibition
- document the research and design of a thematic exhibition in their Visual Arts journal
- use appropriate art terminology in the evaluation and presentation of artworks

Unit 3:

Collect, extend and connect

Area of Study 3 – Curate, design, propose

Outcome 3

Key knowledge

- the characteristics of exhibitions
- the characteristics of exhibition spaces
- the responsibilities involved in curating an exhibition
- methods used for identifying and analysing the curatorial considerations and the thematic connections between the artworks and artists in an exhibition
- methods used to develop didactic information about the theme, artists and artworks in an exhibition
- the strategies used to plan and develop an exhibition in a specific space
- art terminology used to discuss exhibitions, artists and artworks

Key skills

- research and discuss the characteristics of exhibitions
- research and discuss the characteristics of exhibition spaces
- research and discuss the responsibilities involved in curating an exhibition
- discuss and analyse the curatorial considerations and the thematic connections between the artworks of artists in an exhibition
- develop an exhibition proposal for a specific space using the works of the three selected artists from Unit 3 Area of Study 1
- explain and analyse the presentation of artworks in the exhibition and the thematic connections between them
- present and discuss didactic information including the theme of the exhibition, and the artists and artworks
- discuss the characteristics of exhibitions, exhibition spaces, artists and artworks using art terminology

Links to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Art Creative Practice

Including but not limited to...

Unit 1:

Interpreting artworks and exploring the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1 – Artists

Artworks and audiences

Outcome 1, applying the structural and personal lenses when analysing artwork

Key knowledge

- the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- the use of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the use of personal opinions and points of view about artworks
- the ways artists use visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in their artworks
- terminology used in discussion of artists and their artworks

Key skills

- analyse and discuss the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- apply relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- formulate and justify personal opinions with reference to artworks and related sources
- analyse and discuss how artists use visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in their artworks
- use appropriate art terminology and references to a range of sources in the discussion of artists and their artworks

Unit 2:

Interpreting artworks and developing the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1 – The artist, society and culture

Outcome 1, use the cultural lens to compare the practices of artists and artworks from different cultures and times

Key knowledge

- the role and purpose of art in different cultural contexts and times
- the use of relevant aspects of the Cultural Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the use, as appropriate, of relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks
- methods of making and presenting artworks in different historical and contemporary cultural contexts
- how artworks reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of different cultures
- the different ways that artists collaborate to make artworks
- the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- referencing to support the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of artworks
- art terminology used in the analysis, evaluation and comparison of artworks and the practices of artists

Key skills

- apply the Cultural Lens to analyse and interpret artworks from different cultures and times
- apply, as appropriate, relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- compare artworks from different cultural and historical contexts
- analyse diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks
- analyse methods of making and presenting artworks in historical and contemporary cultural contexts
- analyse how artworks can reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of different cultures
- investigate the different ways that artists collaborate to make artworks
- evaluate and compare the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- use references to artworks to support analysis, evaluation and interpretation
- use appropriate art terminology to analyse, evaluate and compare the practices of artists and artworks

Terminology From the VCE Art Making and Exhibiting Study Design

[VCE Art Making and Exhibiting](http://vcaa.vic.edu.au)
(vcaa.vic.edu.au)

Art elements

Colour, line, shape, form, tone, texture, sound, time and light

Art principles

Emphasis (focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition (including pattern), balance, contrast, proportion, space and scale

Aesthetic qualities

Aesthetic qualities are usually explained as the way in which art elements, art principles, materials and techniques work together to influence the mood or emotion of an artwork. The term refers to the visual appeal of an artwork and how aesthetic qualities evoke an emotional impact and reaction within the viewer.

For the purposes of this study the following are accepted explanations of aesthetic qualities:

- the visual appearance of an artwork
- an emotional impact or reaction the artist intends the viewer to experience
- the use of art elements and art principles that allow the artist to convey a certain mood and evoke feelings in the viewer
- the materials and techniques used in an artwork to create qualities that speak to the overall feeling, mood or emotion of the artwork.

Art forms

An art form is an established form of artistic expression. For the purposes of VCE Art Making and Exhibiting, art forms can include but are not limited to painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, film, video, ceramics, sound, photography, digital artworks, installations, performance, interdisciplinary practices, fashion, textiles and street art.

The materials are the various properties and characteristics of an art form. Materials are manipulated through the use of tools and equipment, known as techniques. The processes used in the making of artworks in specific art forms include the activities, procedures and investigation engaged by artists.

Context

The context of an artwork is the frame of reference that allows the meaning of the artwork to be interpreted. Interpretation of the meaning of an artwork can evolve from the context. The context of an artwork can be the location and time in which the artwork is made, presented or viewed. Context can also be economic, philosophical, historical, social or cultural influences on the practices of the artist, the artist's intentions, and their representation of ideas, values and beliefs in their artworks. The artist's intentions for the presentation of their work, its exhibition in current and subsequent locations, and the values, beliefs and interests of the audience also provide the context for the artwork.

Critique

A critique is a discursive collaborative environment that is organised to engage, explore, express, present and evaluate artworks and to understand, reflect on and improve awareness of the characteristics of art making.

Influences and inspiration

Influences occur and are used throughout art making and include artists and artworks. Inspiration can be viewed more broadly and includes objects, memories and contexts that are personal to the artist.

Visual language

Visual language combines the art elements and art principles with materials, techniques and processes to communicate meaning and personal, cultural and contemporary ideas to an audience.

Additional Terminology From the VCE Art Creative Practice Study Design

[Pages - VCE Art Making and Exhibiting \(vcaa.vic.edu.au\)](http://vcaa.vic.edu.au)

Body of Work

In VCE Art Creative Practice, the Body of Work consists of personal responses by the student in their art practice. The Body of Work consists of artworks that integrate the four components of the Creative Practice: research and exploration, experimentation and development, reflection and evaluation, and refinement and resolution. Using the Creative Practice the student will produce a collection of artworks, related to each other through ideas, subject matter, style, art form, or materials and techniques. Each of the artworks that comprise the Body of Work should be of equal complexity and importance to the overall collection.

Contemporary artworks and artists

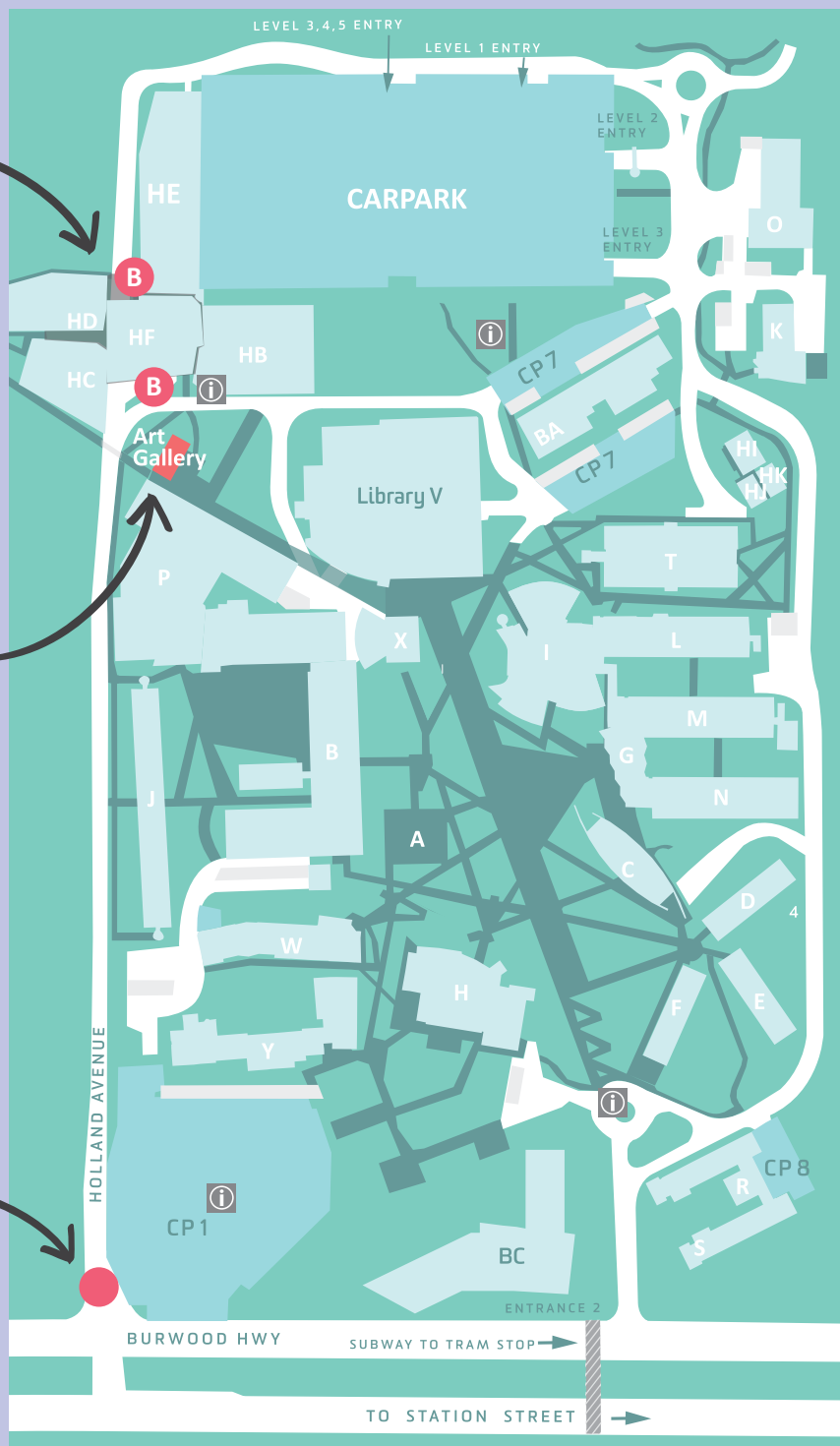
For the purposes of this study, contemporary artists are defined as those who have produced art in the 21st century or since 2001. Contemporary art mirrors contemporary culture and society. Throughout this study students compare historical and contemporary artworks and artists' practices.

Bus Drop Off Point

30-minute Loading Zone here – this is the drop off point for school buses. Additional bus drop off point 10m along if Loading Zone occupied.

Deakin University Art Gallery
Building FA**Deakin University
Burwood Campus**

Enter via Gate 1 from Burwood Highway. Travel down Holland Avenue to Bus Drop Off Point, just after bridge overpass.



The Deakin University Art Collection and Galleries Unit offers school tours and hands on workshops for students from F – 10 and for VCE Art Making and Exhibiting and Art Creative Practice. To discuss our programs and how we can tailor a program to suit your school's needs, please contact our Education and Public Programs Officer, Tabitha Davies.

Education and Public Programs Officer
Tabitha Davies

P: 9244 6519

M: 0491 974 249

E: t.davies@deakin.edu.au

W: [School programs](#) | [Deakin University Art Gallery](#)

Deakin University Collection and Art Galleries
Building FA

221 Burwood Highway, Burwood 3125

Ph: 9244 5344


E: artgallery@deakin.edu.au

W: [Deakin University Art Gallery - Exhibitions and Events](#)



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

Head to our website deakin.edu.au/art-collection/ for information about current exhibitions and keep up-to-date on our activities and exhibitions here:

-  Facebook.com/ArtDeakin
-  Twitter.com/ArtDeakin
-  Instagram.com/deakinartgallery
-  izi.travel - Deakin Art Collection and sculpture walk guides

STAY IN TOUCH!

Scan the code to become a gallery subscriber and stay up-to-date with exhibitions, openings and events.



SCHOOL PROGRAMS

For information regarding our school Programs or to book a tour and/ or workshop, please scan here.



Deakin University Art Gallery Building FA, Melbourne Burwood Campus, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood VIC 3125
Enquiries T +61 3 9244 5344 E artgallery@deakin.edu.au
Gallery Hours Monday – Friday, 10 am – 4 pm During exhibition periods. Closed public holidays. Free Entry

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which Deakin University stands and pay our respect to Elders: past, present and future.