

# CONTEMPORARY ART



ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

NORTH TERRACE, ADELAIDE Open daily 10am–5pm [artgallery.sa.gov.au](http://artgallery.sa.gov.au)



## HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

The activities suggested in this resource link with the Australian Curriculum: Arts (Visual Arts) through the strands of Responding and Making, providing opportunities for students to experience and explore the concepts of artists, artworks, world and audience. These can be used as a starting point to consider a range of perspectives within the context of social, cultural and historical viewpoints.

Some of the ways students can learn more about contemporary art include:

- Responding by using eyes, ears and imaginations
- Discussing how and why works are made and displayed
- Investigating the diversity of contemporary art forms
- Exploring techniques and materials
- Making by experimenting with new or familiar materials
- Using art to tell their own story

By viewing works of art in the Gallery and initiating dialogue with students Australian Curriculum outcomes can be met with ease.

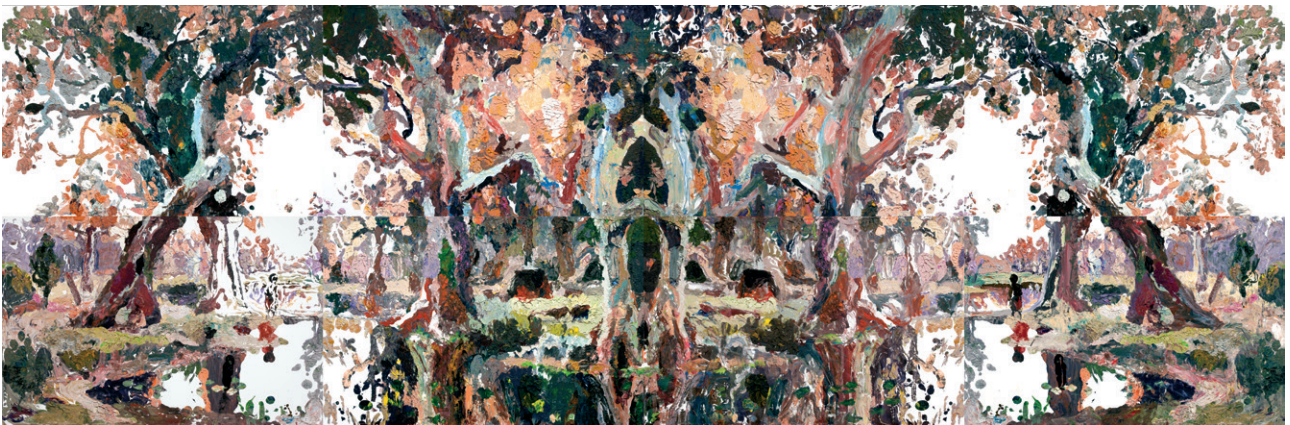


image detail: Ben Quilty, Australia, 1973, *Evening shadows, Rorschach after Johnstone*, 2011, Robertson, New South Wales, oil on linen, eight panels, 115.0 x 175.0 cm (each panel), 230.0 x 702.0 cm (overall); Gift of Ben Quilty through the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Contemporary Collectors 2013. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy Ben Quilty

image (front cover): Ricky Swallow, Australia, 1974, *The exact dimensions of staying behind*, 2004-05, London, laminated lime wood, 70.0 x 110.0 x 105.0 cm; Maurice A. Clarke Bequest Fund 2013, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide



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Information and hyperlinks correct at time of print. Art Gallery of South Australia staff Kylie Neagle and Lisa Slade contributed to the development of this resource.



## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

The varied learning opportunities presented in the Gallery's collection of contemporary art align with multiple Australian Curriculum areas including Arts, English, History, Mathematics and Science. In addition, the resource supports the cross curriculum priorities of Sustainability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, and Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia; and the General Capabilities of building Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social Capability and Ethical Understanding.

### GENERAL CAPABILITIES

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Information and Communication technology
- Critical and Creative Thinking
- Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding

### CROSS CURRICULUM PRIORITIES

- Sustainability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Stories
- Asia and Australia's Engagement with Asia

### KEY LITERACY WORDS

Acquisitive/Acquisition	Critic
Appropriation	Cultural conventions
Assemblage	Curator
Art criticism	Installation
Artist	Judge
Artwork	Mainstream
Audience	Medium/Media
Conceptual art	Moving Image
Contemporary	Philanthropy
Controversy	Series

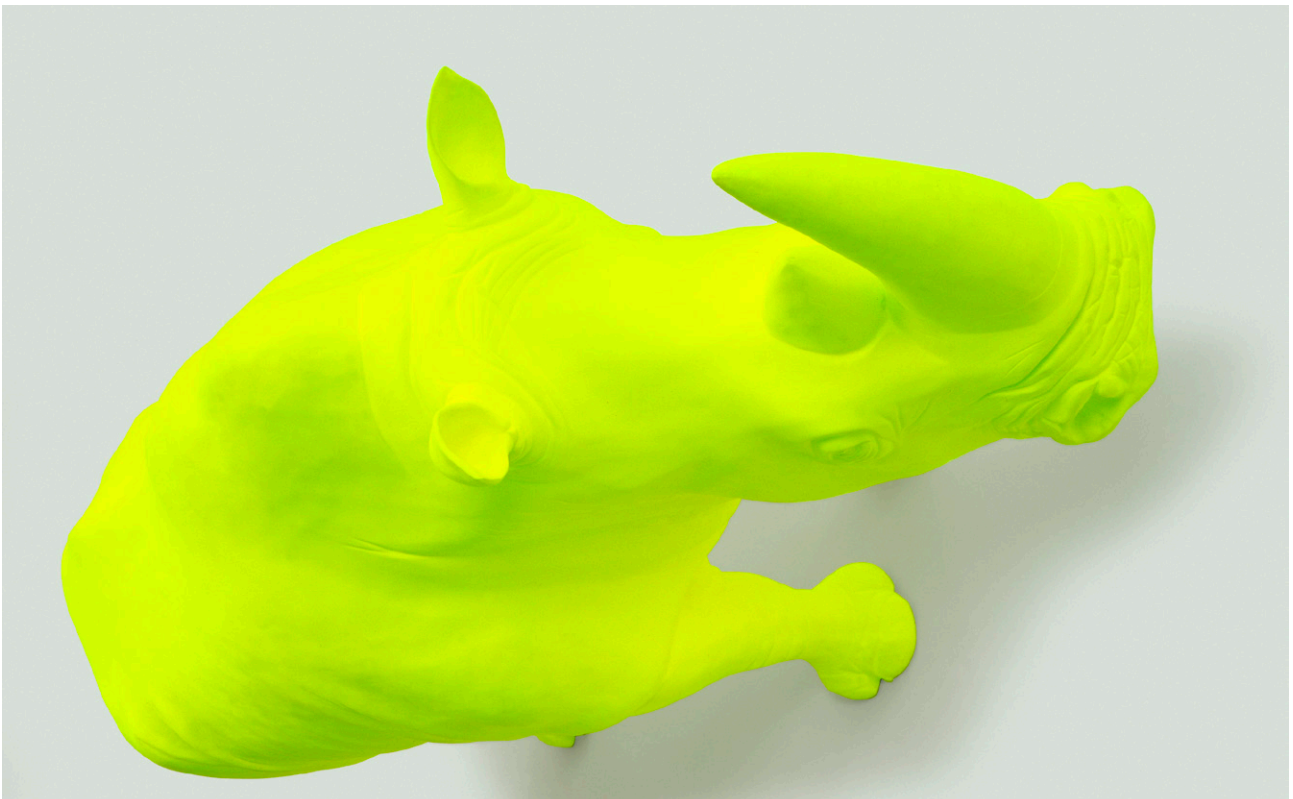


image: James Angus, Australia, 1970, *Rhinoceros*, 1995, Fremantle, Western Australia, fibreglass, synthetic polymer paint, aluminium, 105.0 x 320.0 x 165.0 cm; Gift of Helen Brown 1996 Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

## WHAT IS CONTEMPORARY ART?

Assistant Director of Artistic Programs Lisa Slade provides 5 definitions of contemporary art.

### 1 All great art has been contemporary art at some stage.

The very idea of the contemporary is anything but new. Young radicals like Picasso, Kahlo and Pollock were once ridiculed and derided. Now they're household names – the subjects of crowd-pleasing blockbusters and the darlings of auction houses. Their journey from the edge as boundary riders, to the centre, to become defining voices in art, is the story of art history itself. It's a little like thinking of your grandfather or grandmother as a defiant adolescent.

### 2 Contemporary art is about contemporary life.

With the capacity to tell us about our world and ourselves in ways that are poetic and potent – in ways that we'd never imagine – contemporary artists challenge us to understand and engage in our world. Contemporary art is always related to the time and place in which it is produced.

### 3 Contemporary art is good fun....and at times, controversial.

Contemporary art is fun and fearless. And it can look like anything. Even objects and experiences never considered art are today part of the contemporary art canon. Carsten Höller's 56 metre long slide in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall treated visitors to a theme park experience that awakened their sense of fun, fearlessness and their inner philosopher. Höller's work, like much contemporary art, has generated its share of controversy too.

### 4 Contemporary art is everywhere.

Contemporary art is everywhere and life would be pretty dull without it. It's part of the very fabric of our lives. A couple of years ago, festival doyenne Robyn Archer challenged us to try one day without art. She awakened us, as all good art does, to the human need for beauty, connection and inspiration. Furthermore contemporary art with the help of burgeoning biennials, art fairs and festivals is moving out of the art gallery and coming to you.

### 5 Contemporary artists are future proofers.

As part of the vanguard, those first into battle, those first to feel the brave new world relentlessly unfolding before us, contemporary artists can help us to face the future. They, like the best scientists and bravest thinkers, are the first to ask 'what if?' They see failure as integral to success.



image: Anne Ferran, Australia, born 1949, *Untitled (blue wedding gown #1)*, from the series *Wedding gowns*, 2003, Sydney, gelatin-silver photograph, 92.5 x 258.0 cm (image); Gift of Julian & Stephanie Grose through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2015. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy the artist

Ossian Ward, writer, critic, and Head of Content at Lisson Gallery in London, has devised a method to aid the experience and understanding of contemporary works of art. Use Ward's acronym: TABULA to unpack the contemporary works of art on display in the Gallery.

**Time** Spend 2-3 minutes simply looking at a work of art, in silence. Allow time to gather thoughts, observations and ideas.

**Association** Can you relate? Perhaps you are visually drawn to the work of art or it may remind you of something else you are familiar with.

**Background** The title or wall label may provide some information that may lead you to the artist's intention. At times, just knowing the country the artist is from or the title of the work may help to complete the picture.

**Understanding** As T A B sinks in, you may begin to piece the information together and some realisations may transpire.

**Look Again** Take a second look. Prolonged engagement may mean you see something that went unnoticed before.

**Assessment** You may have now reached some conclusions about or appreciation for the work of art. Evaluation is subjective so refrain from venturing here first. Travel along the TABULA process before making any harsh judgements.



image: Sue Kneebone, Australia, 1963, *For better or for worse*, 2010, Adelaide, giclée print on paper, 90.0 x 70.0 cm; Ed and Sue Tweddell Fund for South Australian Contemporary Art 2010, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Sue Kneebone



image: Alex Seton, Australia, 1977, *My concerns will outlive yours*, 2011, Sydney, Wombeyan marble, stainless steel eyelets, halyard, 28.0 x 155.0 x 75.0 cm; Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2011, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. © Alexander Seton. photo: Per Ericson



## CONTEMPORARY ART – RESPONDING AND MAKING

### PRIMARY

#### RESPONDING

Contemporary artists encourage us to ask questions and see the world from varied perspectives. As a class, select a contemporary work of art in the Gallery. Look closely at the work of art. What is your first impression? Take turns sharing a word that best describes the work. Explain why you selected that word. Listen to other responses, does your opinion differ? If so, how?

Select a contemporary work of art that best represents one of the words from the list below: Soft, hard, light, dark, dry, wet, loud, quiet, sharp, hot or cold. Look again for a different work of art that makes you feel happy, sad, calm or angry? Can you find a work of art that makes you laugh? Share your responses with a friend.

Contemporary artists often find innovative ways to make works of art. Collate a list of the unusual materials used in works of art on display in the Gallery. As a class create a list of pros and cons when working with different media. What is the most unusual item you could use to create a work of art?

Imagine you are a judge responsible for choosing the best contemporary work in the Gallery's collection. Which work would you choose? Explain your answer.

What can you say about contemporary art? Name 5 things you noticed.

Contemporary artists often reimagine traditional images or objects and provide new perspectives on historical works of art. Take a walk through the Melrose and Elder Wings. In small groups, locate a work of art that reminds you of one you experienced elsewhere in the Gallery. Perhaps the artist has used similar materials or has addressed similar themes. You may like to use a Venn diagram to organise your thoughts. Share your response with the class.

Select a work three-dimensional work of art and consider how the artist would have made it. Write a method providing clear instructions for how this piece could be made again.

After looking carefully at the materials used by contemporary artists on display, select 5 works of art and rank the works from heaviest and lightest. Discuss your ranking with a friend. **TIP** Consider the material properties as well as the quantity or volume of the material.



image: Eko Nugroho, Indonesia, 1977, *Flower generation #2*, 2012, Yogyakarta, fibreglass, resin, plastic, fabric, 110.0 x 61.0 x 153.0 cm; Roy and Marjory Edwards Bequest Fund 2013, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Courtesy the artist

## PRIMARY

### MAKING

Since at least the time of Marcel Duchamp artists have pushed the boundaries with ideas and objects. Some of the artists in the Gallery's collection have used found objects or unusual materials. Locate these works of art and make a list of their materials. Create a work of art using only found or recycled objects.

Artists love to experiment and will often use materials we may consider as ordinary or disposable. Using only white paper create a three-dimensional work of art that focusses on texture.

As a class, create a Contemporary Art Prize for your school. Assign roles to each member of the class to form a committee:

- Sponsorship: Who will sponsor your prize? What will it be? Perhaps approach local businesses or your school principal.
- Entries: What are the rules for entering works of art?
- Venue and Display: Where will the exhibition be displayed and who will install the work?
- Exhibition: When is opening night? Who will open your exhibition? Will you have a catalogue?
- Judges: Who have you selected as your judges? What is the criteria for selecting a winner? Will you have a people's choice prize?

### THINK AND DISCUSS

If you could make a work of art from any material in the world, what would it be and why?



image: Danie Mellor; Australia, 1971, *Postcards from the edge (in search of living curiosities)*, from the series *Multiple Histories*, 2011, Canberra, mixed media on paper, 152.5 x 221.5 cm; d'Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 2011, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy of the artist. Represented by Caruana & Reid Fine Art, Sydney and Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane, Courtesy of the artist, Caruana & Reid Fine Art, Sydney and Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane



image: Ah Xian, China/Australia, born 1960, Jingdong Cloisonné Factory, manufacturer, China, Dachang County, Heibei Province, China, *Human human - cloisonné bust 3*, 2001, Dachang County, Hebei Province, cloisonné enamel on copper, 45.0 x 42.5 x 25.5 cm; Gift of ETSA Utilities and the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2006, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. © courtesy the artist



## SECONDARY

### RESPONDING

To create a new work of art artists will sometimes review and rework ideas and images from the past. Contemporary artists often copy or find direct inspiration from artists that precede them. This is considered appropriation. Can you find an example of an artist who has used appropriation or referenced another artist or work of art? Provide evidence to explain your answer.

'Contemporary art is always related to the time and place in which it is produced'. Consider this statement with relation to a contemporary works of art in the Gallery's collection. Explain how this statement could also relate to a historical work of art.

Investigate incidents in Australian art history where contemporary works of art have caused controversy or debate. Explain how these events challenged the mainstream?

Discuss the statement 'Contemporary art is about contemporary life'. Use three works of art to support your argument.

Contemporary artists often challenge our assumptions about culture, society and politics. Select a work of art that engages with contemporary social issues and create a newspaper headline that articulates this issue.

*Criticism works in conversation. This conversation takes many shapes: the conversation between critic and art, between critic and reader, between critic and critic.* – Jane Howard, culture journalist based in Adelaide. Become familiar with exhibition reviews in relation to their content and tone. Select one area of the Gallery and write an exhibition review. What contemporary works will you discuss in your review? Why have certain works of art been placed adjacent to others? As a class create a website that collates your reviews. Continue to add to this forum as you see new exhibitions or displays in a bid to stimulate genuine dialogue. **HINT** Check Adelaide Review, Artlink, Art Guide, The Advertiser or The Australian or see resource list for a recent review of *Versus Rodin* or TARNANTHI.

Colour is one of the most powerful art elements as it has the power to convey mood and emotion. Select your favourite contemporary work of art on display. Investigate the history and science behind three colours used in the work you selected. Present your findings to the class using additional works of art to support your findings.



image: Yhonnie Scarce, Kokatha/Nukunu people, South Australia, Australia, born 1973, Woomera, South Australia, *Burial ground*, 2011, Melbourne, glass, Perspex, 33.0 x 133.0 x 38.0 cm (variable), 97.0 x 206.0 x 81.0 cm (plinth); Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2012, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. Courtesy of the Artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne



## SECONDARY

### MAKING

Read Lisa Slade's 5 definitions of contemporary art. Create a work of art that embodies at least one of these definitions. In small groups, begin by unpacking the definitions and brainstorming ideas that would meet these characteristics. Include an artist statement with your work that explains how your work aligns to this contemporary framework.

Time based works such as video, sound art or performance art are referred to as four-dimensional works of art. Create your own 4D work of art that responds to an event that occurred in the last year.

Today's artists challenge us to ask questions and engage with our world. Create a work of art that engages with a social and cultural issue.

The human figure has long been a source of inspiration for artists. Compare contemporary works of art that depict the human form to others on display throughout the Gallery. How do these works of art reflect the concerns and ideas of the time in which they were made? Create your own sculpture that responds to one of the following themes:

- Fragile
- Social stigmas
- Camouflage
- Picture perfect

After selecting your favourite contemporary work of art on display, locate three other works that you think should be displayed alongside your contemporary choice. Present an exhibition proposal explaining your curatorial decisions. What will your mini display be called and why?

**TIP** You may like to consider materials, themes, artists, era or the location where the works were made.

### THINK & DISCUSS

If an artist conceives of an idea, but employs a specialist to create the work of art, whose work is it? What is more important – idea or product?



image: Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, Australia, 1977, *Merantau*, 2016, Fremantle, Western Australia, wood, bronze, oil paint and pencil, 85.0 x 80.0 x 490.0 (irreg.); Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors 2016, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist

## RESOURCES



image: Nell, Australia, 1975, *The Wake*, 2014-15, Sydney and Ernabella, South Australia, stoneware, earthenware, concrete, bronze, glass, underglaze, glaze, polyurethane, varnish, acrylic paint, enamel paint, spray paint, fabric paint, pigment, varnish, oxide, bondcrete, decals, silver leaf, gold leaf, copper, glitter, wood, branches, (dimensions variable); Gift of John and Jane Ayers, Candy Bennett and Edwina Lehmann, Andrew and Cathy Cameron, Chris Cuthbert and Sally Dan-Cuthbert, Rick and Jan Frolich, Julian and Stephanie Grose, Jane Michell, Brenda Shanahan, Vivienne Sharpe, Rae-Ann Sinclair and Nigel Williams, Paul and Thelma Taliangis, Lisa and Peter Weeks and Dr Terry Wu, through the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors 2016, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and STATION, Melbourne

### BOOKS & EDUCATION RESOURCES

Barrett, T, *Why is that Art? Aesthetics and Criticism of Contemporary Art?*, Oxford University Press, USA, 2017

Boldt, C & Meredith E, *Think and Make like an Artist*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2017

Cree, L, *Awesome! Australian Art for Contemporary Kids*, Thames and Hudson, Australia, 2002

Hodge, S, *How to look at art*, TATE Publishing, 2014

Hodge, S, *Why your five year old could not have done that*, Thames and Hudson, Great Britain, 2012

Klein, J & Klein, S, *What is Contemporary Art?*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2012

Kyung, A, *Who's Afraid of Contemporary Art?* Thames & Hudson, London 2017

Smith, T, *What is Contemporary Art?*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2010

Ward, O, *Ways of Looking: How to Experience Contemporary Art*, Lawrence King Publishing, 2014

Wilson, M, *How to Read Contemporary Art*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2013

Yenawine, P. *Visual Thinking Strategies*, Harvard Education Publishing Group, 2014

21st Century Art for Kids, Queensland Art Gallery, 2010

Encounters with Contemporary Art: an education kit for the contemporary collection, Art Gallery of New South Wales



## RESOURCES

### WEBSITES & VIDEOS

Art21 – Getting started: An introduction to Teaching with Contemporary Art  
<http://bit.ly/2hx5xOe>

A Creative Guide to Contemporary Art (ABC Splash)  
<http://ab.co/2IGiBFI>

Art Gallery of New South Wales – Contemporary Art  
<http://bit.ly/2iU8EDo>

Art Story, The  
<http://bit.ly/2xNi4TO>

Contemporary Art and the Role of Interpretation by Helen Charman and Michaela Ross – Tate Papers  
<http://bit.ly/2ICCOp6>

The Conversation + InDaily | Arts + Culture | James Moss  
<http://bit.ly/2xLv6z>

Introducing Formal Analysis – The Getty  
<http://bit.ly/2xM7Wuo>

In Daily – The turbulent world of the art prize  
<http://bit.ly/2gUqNfV>

It's Not Art – Caitin Eyre (Fineprint)  
<http://bit.ly/2zqa5QV>

Museum of Contemporary Art  
<http://bit.ly/2gSjtwF>

Sydney Morning Herald + The Age + Canberra Times + Brisbane Times | Spectrum | Review by John McDonald  
<http://bit.ly/2zq6pyH>

Sydney Morning Herald Review: TARNANTHI, Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art  
<http://bit.ly/2z9Sopa>

Talking Points Contemporary Visual Arts 2013–2014 (Australia Council)  
<http://bit.ly/2yLEUV>

TARNANTHI  
<http://bit.ly/2zQPAOd>

The Ramsay Prize  
<http://bit.ly/2hvYzZN>

Ways of Looking Framework  
<http://bit.ly/2jIBNtl>



image: Sarah Contos, Australia, born 1978, *Sarah Contos Presents: The Long Kiss Goodbye*, 2016, Sydney, screen-print on linen, canvas and lamé, digital printed fabrics and various found fabrics, PVC, poly-fil, glass, ceramic and plastic beads, thread, artists' gloves; 610.0 x 330.0 x 25.0 cm; Gift of the James & Diana Ramsay Foundation for the 2017 Ramsay Art Prize, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide