

*Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park*

## Education Kit

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art  
27 March - 14 June 2021

Institute of Modern Art  
17 July - 18 September 2021

acca

IMA

## Exhibition Introduction

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Yhonnie Scarce is known for installations that combine archival photographs, found objects and hand-blown glass, ranging from intimately-scaled assemblages through to architecturally-scaled public artworks. Scarce belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples, and her artwork is conceptually and structurally informed by her connections to personal and communal Indigenous cultural histories.

*Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park* explores the devastating impacts of colonisation, medical testing, religious missionaries, and missile and nuclear bomb testing on her Country and people. The exhibition title is taken from an outdoor tourist attraction in Woomera, where Yhonnie Scarce was born, that displays a selection of the bombs, missiles and aircraft that have been tested on Scarce's Country since the 1950s, a practice that continues today.

*Missile Park* is a focused survey, spanning Yhonnie Scarce's output from art school right up to a major new commission, and the largest exhibition of Scarce's artwork to date.

*Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park* was developed by ACCA in partnership with the Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane.



### Images

Cover: Yhonnie Scarce, *Missile Park* 2021, detail, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis

Above: Yhonnie Scarce, *Missile Park* 2021, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis

## How to Use This Kit

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This Education Kit has been developed for use alongside visiting the exhibition *Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park*.

Teachers can select and adapt the curriculum-linked questions and activities provided within the resource for learning experiences in the gallery or classroom.

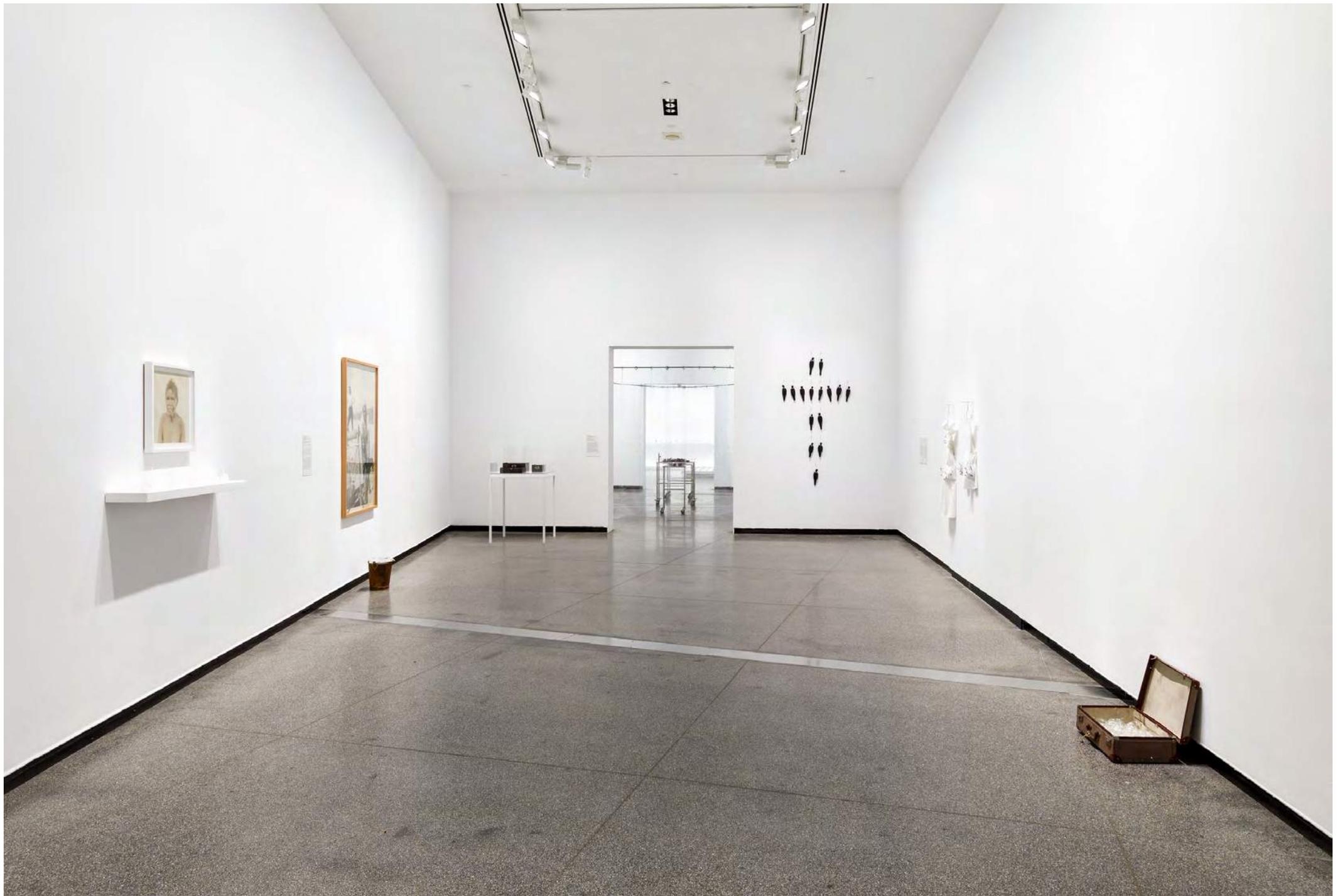
Australian Curriculum descriptors are listed and expanded upon alongside activities for primary and secondary students.

## Exhibition Floorplan

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1. *The day we went away* 2004  
*What they wanted* 2006-10  
*Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849)* 2013
2. *Dinah* 2016  
*Working class man (Andamooka opal fields)* 2017  
*Burial ground* 2009  
*The cultivation of whiteness* 2013
3. *Missile Park* 2021
4. *Weak in colour but strong in blood* 2014





## *The day we went away* 2004

hand-blown glass, found suitcase

*The day we went away* is the earliest artwork in *Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park* and was made by Scarce during her undergraduate degree at the South Australian School of Art. The work consists of a small, found suitcase, perhaps designed for a child, which is filled with forty hand-blown, transparent and colourless glass elements in the form of bush bananas. Rather than being placed on a plinth or housed safely in a protective acrylic case the artwork is set directly on the gallery floor, with the lid of the suitcase leant against the wall. This placement, where the piece can be easily overlooked or even accidentally stepped-on, creates a very vulnerable situation for the delicate glass forms inside.

The effect of near-invisibility and defenselessness created by this visual language can be understood in relation to the subject of the piece, the Stolen Generations, which refers to the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families to live within colonial households. These children, often infants, were frequently exploited as unpaid labour in the homes of non-Indigenous families, while also being prevented from seeing their parents, speaking their language or maintaining cultural practices.

The bush banana is an Indigenous food that grows on Yhonnie Scarce's Country. Within this artwork you might analyse the bush bananas as a way for the suitcase's imagined owner to keep some part of their Country with them when they were taken away, as a precious, fragile connection to home.

### Images

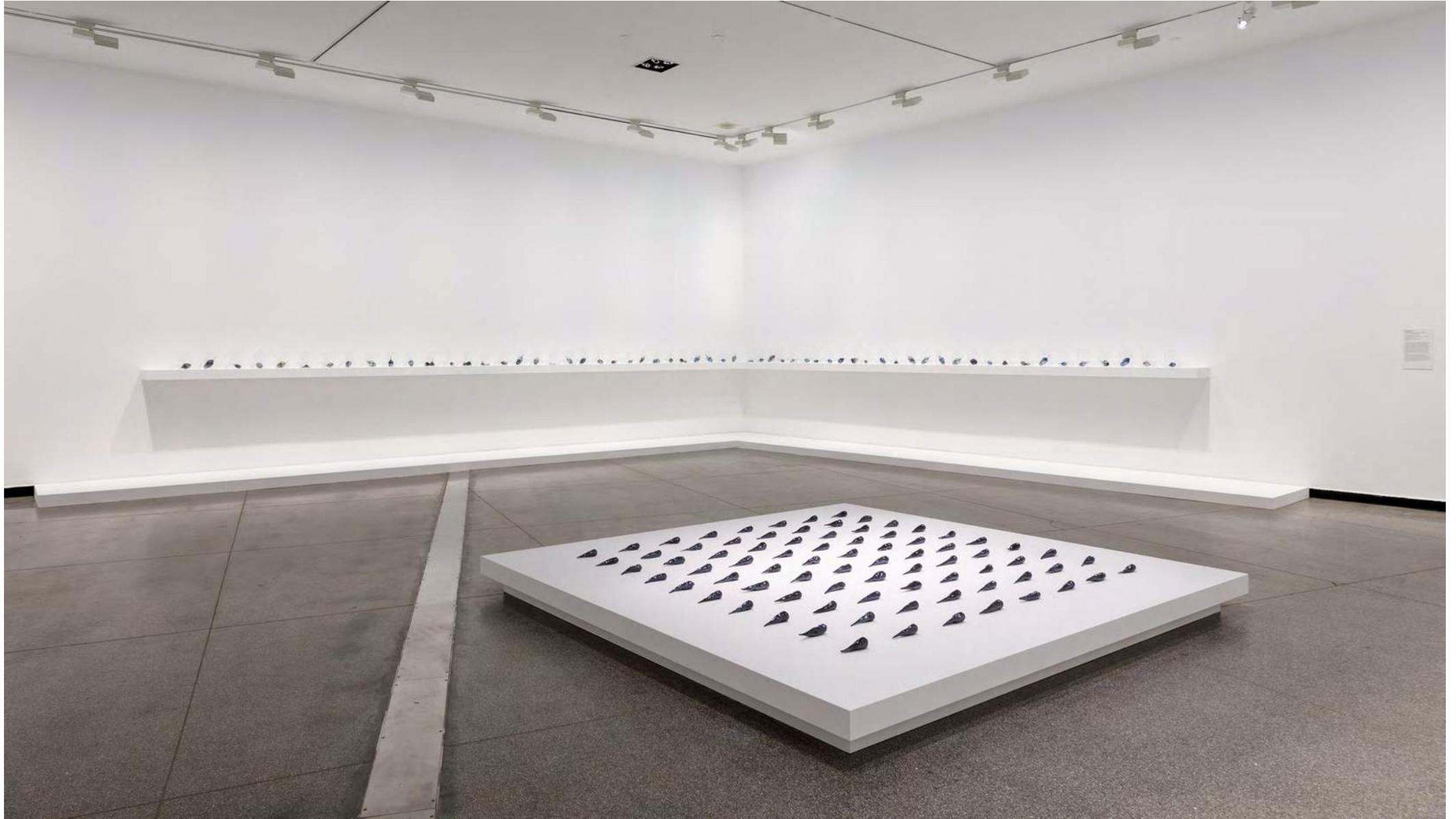
Previous page: *Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park*, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis

Above: Yhonnie Scarce, *The day we went away* 2004, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis



### Discussion questions:

- Have you seen a suitcase like this before? Do you think the artist made the suitcase herself? If yes/no, why?
- What kind of person do you think owns this suitcase – how old are they, and what makes you think that?
- Why are bush bananas the only things that have been packed in the suitcase? What does the materiality (the material they are made from – glass) of the bush bananas add to the artwork? How is the choice of material significant?
- Cultural context: How does the occurrence of the Stolen Generations contribute to the meaning of the artwork?



## *The cultivation of whiteness* 2004

hand-blown glass, painted metal and found glass beakers  
60 glass sculptures in 60 glass beakers

This work comprises sixty glass bush bananas, each held separately in its own scientific beaker, lined up on a shelf. The forms are blown from dark coloured glass that has an iridescent mirrored surface. Each of the glass fruits has been damaged in some way—some are cut or cracked, and others completely shattered, with only shards remaining in the bottom of the beaker.

The title *The cultivation of whiteness* refers to a racist belief held by nineteenth-century white colonists that 'whiteness' had to be protected from becoming 'denigrated' through mixing with Aboriginal people. This belief led to harmful practices being enacted upon Aboriginal people, including non-consensual medical experimentation and scientific testing. These pseudo-scientific (meaning falsely or mistakenly regarded as based on scientific methods) practices dehumanised Aboriginal people, and caused great physical and psychological harm.

In this work, each bush banana can be understood as representing an individual who has sustained some sort of injury as a result of 'scientific racism', and the practices carried out in the name of the cultivation of whiteness.

The cuts to the glass, made by the artist using an angle grinder, are metaphoric of medical experimentation – like scars left after a serious operation. Similarly, the shattered fruit can be thought of as instances when an Aboriginal person has not survived the violence they sustained, but whose story and memory persists. Finally, by catching the viewers' reflection and bouncing it back at them, the mirrored finish on the glass forms prompts them to consider how their own history is entwined with the histories of the unnamed people on which the work is based.



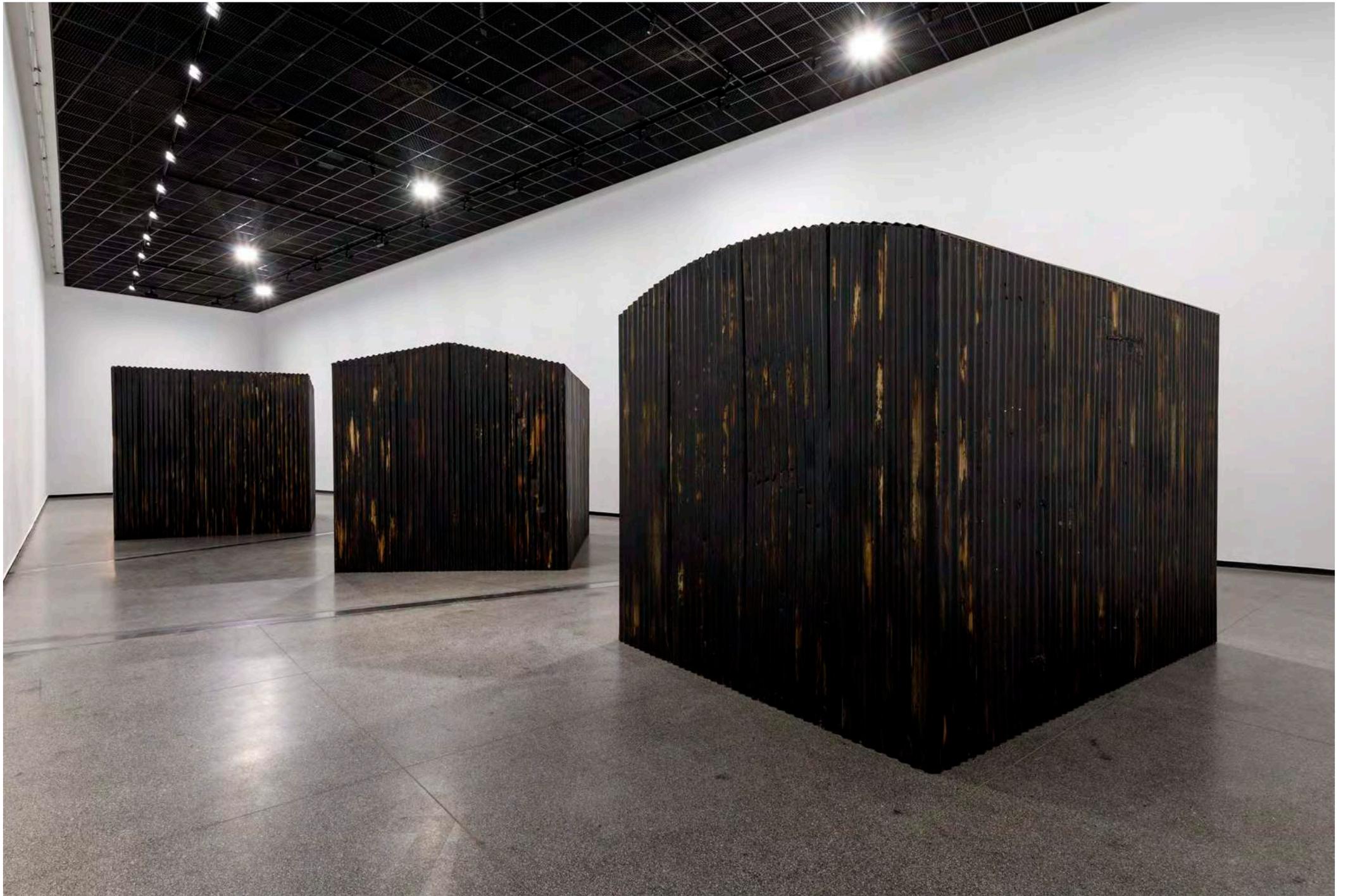
Discussion questions:

- Have you ever seen a mirror used in an artwork before? How does the presence of your own reflection make you feel when looking at this artwork?
- Yhonnie Scarce has used bush foods to represent her people in this artwork. What is another form you could use in your own artwork that could stand in place of an actual representation? What metaphorical significance does your chosen object have?
- Formal context: Yhonnie Scarce has chosen to use ready-made scientific beakers to house the bush bananas. How does this method of display influence the impact and interpretation of the artwork?

Images

Previous page: *Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park*, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis

Above: *Yhonnie Scarce, The cultivation of whiteness* 2013 (detail), hand-blown glass, painted metal and found glass beakers. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2014. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photography: Janelle Low



## Missile Park 2021

zinc sheet, steel frame, earth magnets, bitumen paint, shellac, hand-blown glass

*Missile Park* is a large-scale installation in three parts, each taking the form of a rudimentary (meaning limited or basic) shelter, constructed from corrugated zinc sheets and painted in bitumen. From outside, the only noticeable difference between each is the different roof type – one is flat, another is peaked, and another is curved. The door to one structure is closed, but visitors can enter two at a time to view the interior. Inside the structure is darkness, with holes left by past screws in the zinc the only source of light. These pinpricks appear star-like, reproducing the experience of a night sky in the desert, far away from city lights. Each globular form has a long glass tendril rising from the top. These are reminiscent of either bush plums, which Scarce has included in past works, or cartoon-like bombs, with fuses ready for lighting. The door to another structure is off its hinges and leaning to the side, while the door to the last structure is ajar and loosely chained. Each structure contains twenty grey glass forms atop steel tables.

Scarce has a research driven practice and travels often. Recently she traveled around remote SA with the exhibition curators Max Delany (ACCA's Artistic Director), Liz Nowell (Director of the IMA), and Lisa Waup (Artist and past ACCA exhibitor), to garner inspiration for this new commission and to research family history. The structures in the work are based on vernacular (common/everyday) Australian architecture, particularly temporary buildings established by the military at Maralinga during nuclear testing in the 1950s. The bitumen finish has a dual significance. First, it references a dark, oily substance that reportedly fell onto these buildings as part of the fallout during the nuclear testing period. Secondly, Scarce's father helped build the roads in Woomera, and so bitumen becomes an important reference to the artist's personal and family history. Scarce has also traveled internationally to research memorial sites of nuclear trauma, Indigenous genocide and cultural erasure, including Auschwitz, Chernobyl, Fukushima, Hiroshima, Maralinga, New York, Wounded Knee and former Yugoslavia.



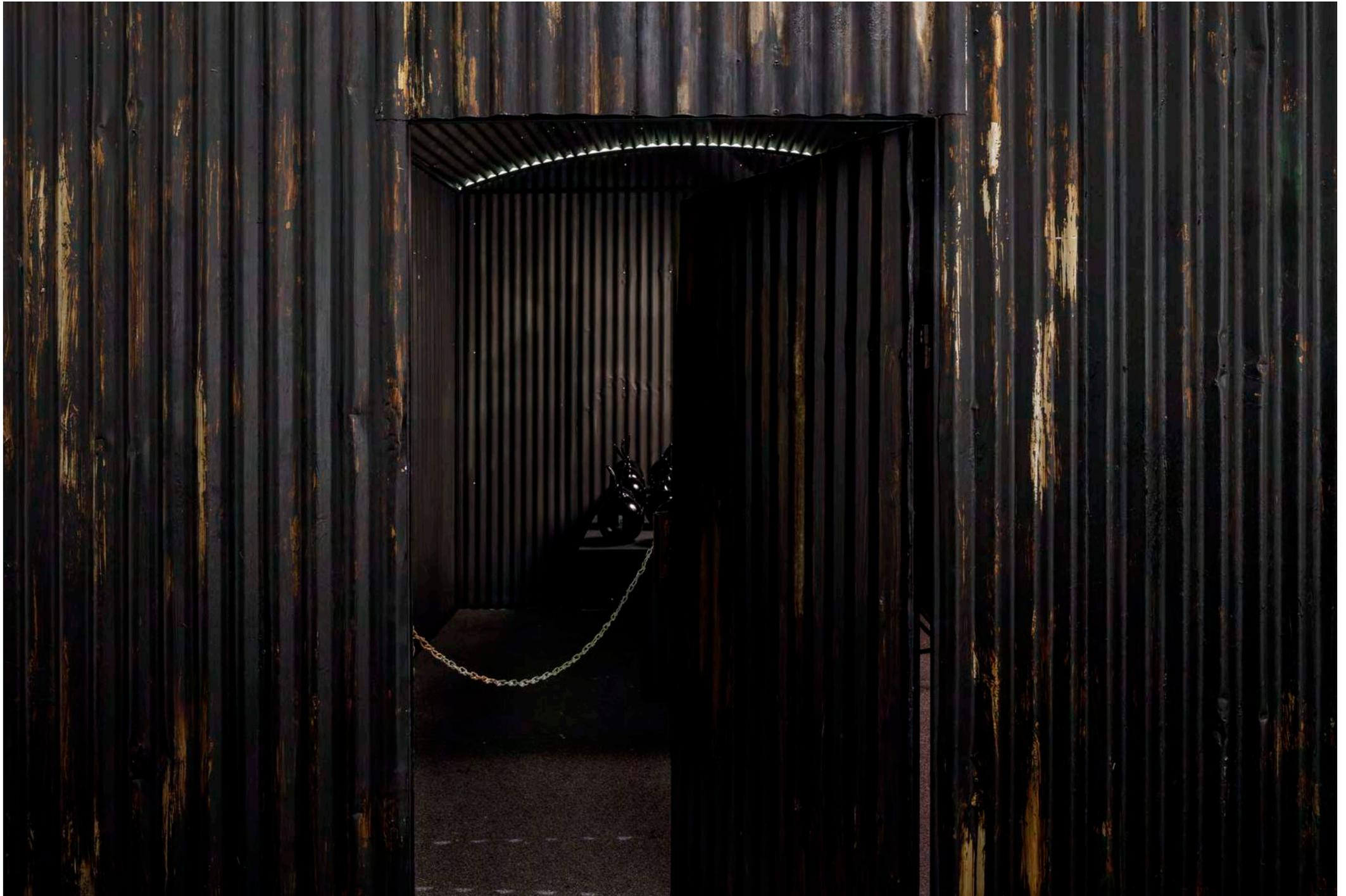
Discussion questions:

- What does it mean for a material to be 'corrugated'? What is the structural benefit of corrugated materials? Can you list two materials that can be corrugated?
- Why do you think an artist would be interested in Australian vernacular (everyday) architecture?
- How do you think the artist has made these structures and their contents? Are they artworks or architecture – or both?
- Personal context: How does Yhonnie use symbols and/or metaphor to communicate her thoughts and ideas?

Images

Previous: Yhonnie Scarce, *Missile Park 2021*, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis

Above and next: Yhonnie Scarce, *Missile Park 2021*, detail, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis



## Support Materials

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LISTEN: Yhonnie Scarce interviewed by Daniel Browning on *Away!* on ABC Radio, April 3rd 2010: <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/awaye/charlie-king-aunty-eva-richardson-and-yhonnie/3671140>

WATCH: Yhonnie Scarce transform red-hot molten glass into a delicate bush yam in a specialised glass making workshop: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gfm6lw7bbmU&t=1s>

READ: An interview with Yhonnie Scarce in which she discusses her artwork, including *Blood on the Wattle* 2013, and how she came to work with glass as her main medium: <https://thisisnofantasy.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Preview-of-Rooms-MagazineYhonnie-ScarceIn-Love-with-Glass.pdf>

WATCH: Yhonnie Scarce as she discusses nuclear testing on Kokatha Country, the ongoing ill effects of radiation on the people who lived there, and how she translated that history into an artwork for exhibition at Art Basel, in Hong Kong: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oSS3KkomDUQ>

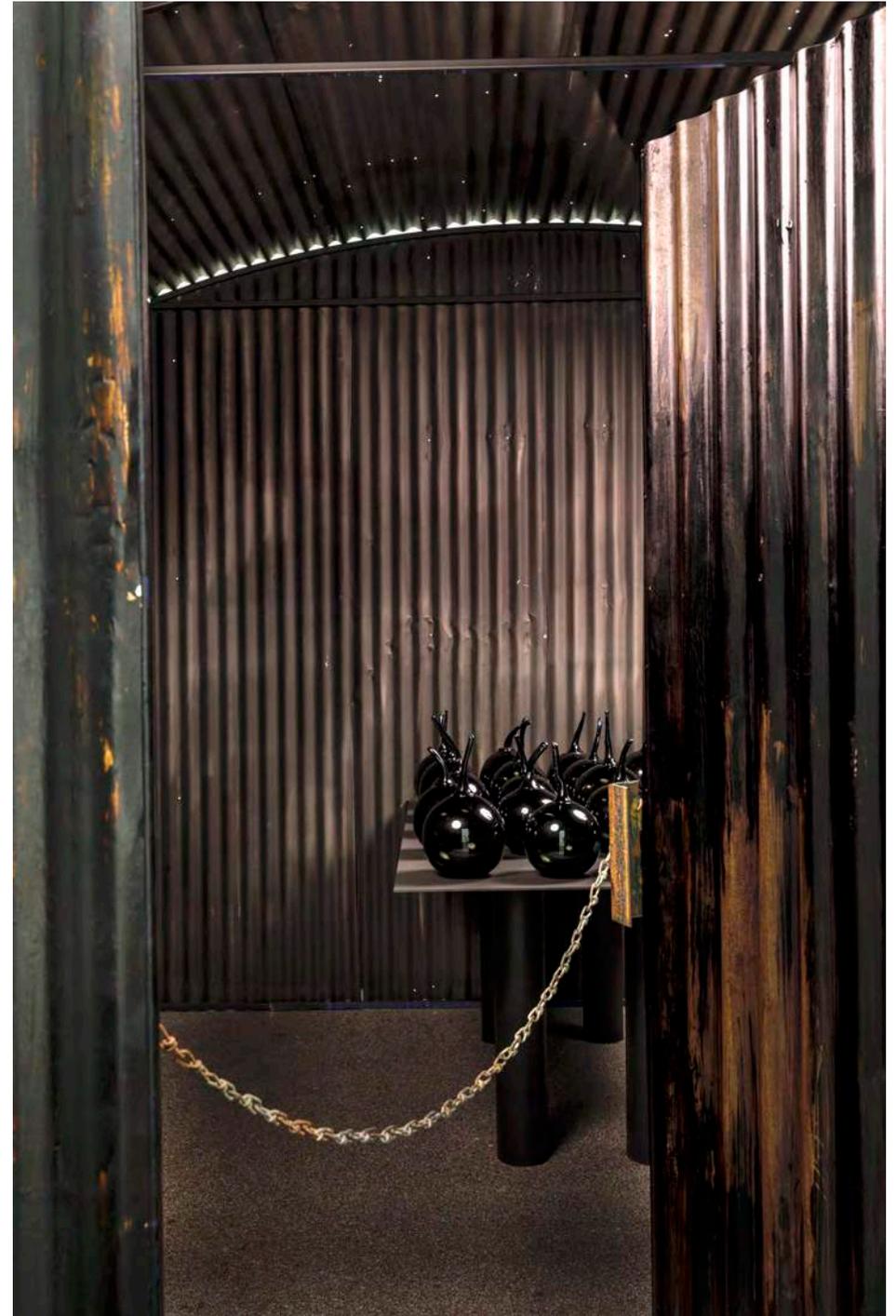
### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Learn our Truth Resources: The Learn Our Truth campaign calls for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led histories to be taught and learnt in schools. Founded by NIYEC, the campaign and resources advocate for the importance of learning 'true' history in schools: <https://learnourtruth.com/about/> and <https://www.niyec.com/resources>

Common Ground: The First Nations Bedtime Stories initiative is aimed at maintaining and strengthening First Nations cultures. In this video resource First Nations Elders and knowledge custodians share non-secret Dreaming stories. These stories are accompanied with educational resources mapped to Primary F-6 school curriculum and Early Learning framework for Australia: <https://www.commonground.org.au/firstnationsbedtimestories>

### Image

Yhonnie Scarce, *Missile Park* 2021, detail, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis



## For Teachers

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### STEM in ART: architectural sculpture challenge

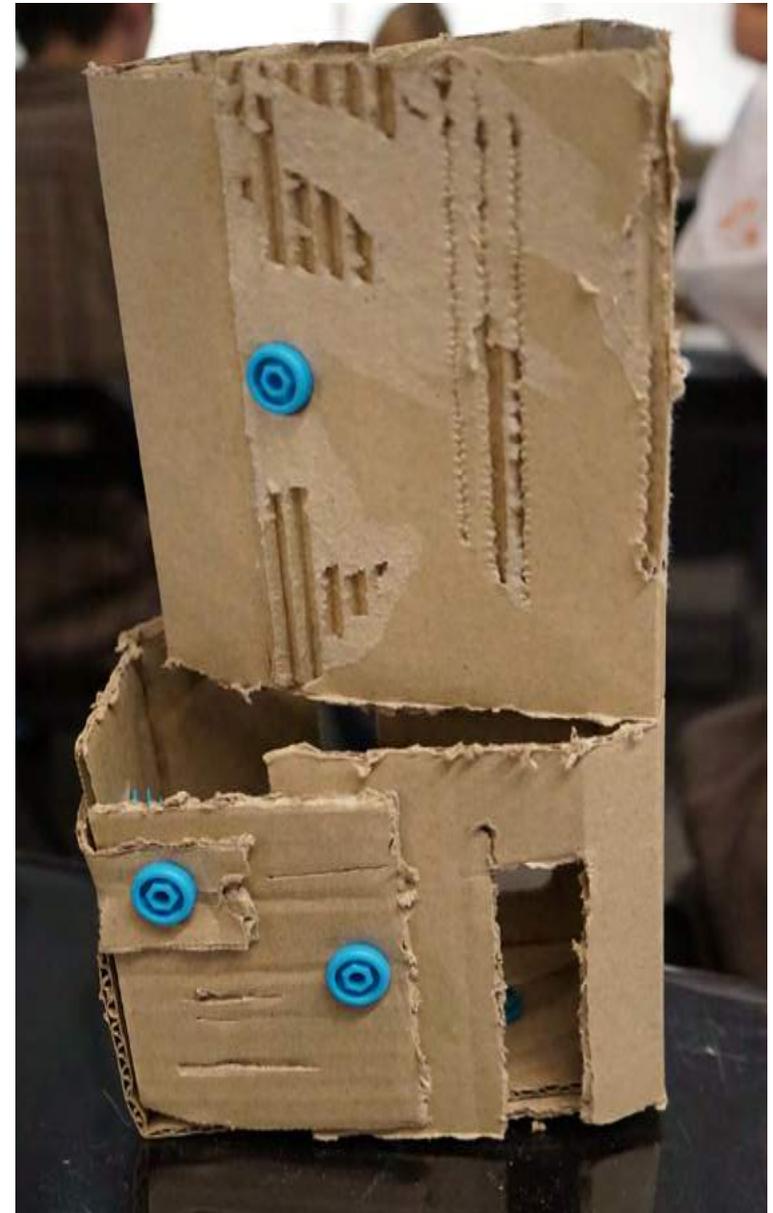
(Adaptable for primary and secondary students)

This activity responds to Yhonnie Scarce's research-driven practice and *Missile Park*. Using the built environment as inspiration, students will create their own sculpture (monument, structure, or architectural model) using recycled cardboard and a series of joining techniques.

- To prepare for the session, students collect a range of recycled cardboard from their home or school in the lead up to the activity.
- Older students can investigate their home or school's built environment and create observational sketches to use in designing their sculpture.
- To begin the session, students investigate the structural and aesthetic properties of the material, and the various ways it can be joined – fold, tab, bracket, bend, flange, brace, slot, gusset.
- Students may use minimal tape/glue/staples to secure braces, folds and brackets, and can also explore textural additions to their artwork by scratching, peeling and perforating the cardboard.
- For early primary students, explore the material properties of the cardboard and experiment with textural additions, then students may add one 3D component, or join multiple artworks together to create larger artworks.
- In a group, reflect on the artistic/design process, and discuss what each artwork might memorialise.

Primary extension: Create another artwork to sit inside the architectural sculpture, responding to ideas of family, ancestry, and culture.

Reflection: What stories does your artwork hold and how can you share them?



## For Teachers

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Secondary extension:

Yhonnie Scarce's artwork is politically motivated and emotionally driven. Her practice is autobiographical and draws on her ancestry with her work often referencing the hidden histories and the ongoing effects of colonisation on Aboriginal people and Country.

Reflect on the sculpture you've made out of cardboard. What is something important that this artwork could encase?

Design and create a smaller sculpture to sit within your larger sculpture. Reflect on your personal life and family, historical details of your ancestry, and environmental factors such as significant places or your surroundings.

Reflection:

- Explain the best features of your final artwork.
- Discuss what personal, historical and environmental influences inform specific features within your artwork. Justify your response.
- Who is the audience for your artwork?
- Reflect on both sculptures; are there any modifications you would make to your external sculpture (shed) to unite both elements of the overall artwork?
- How would you do this?



\*These activities were co-designed by ACCA Education and DATTA Vic with special thanks to Joane Heide and Laura Murphy.

## For Teachers

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### Curriculum links

Australian Curriculum / Visual Arts / Years F-10

Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks (ACAVAM107) (ACAVAM111) (ACAVAM115)

Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including artwork by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM110) (ACAVAM114)

Respond to visual artworks and consider where and why people make visual artworks, starting with visual artworks from Australia, including visual artworks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ACAVAR109) (ACAVAR113)(ACAVAR117)

Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes (ACAVAM119) (ACAVAM121)

Practise techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art-making (ACAVAM126) (ACAVAM128)

Australian Curriculum / Design and Technologies Processes and Production Skills / Years F-10

Investigate:

(ACTDEP005) (ACTDEP014) (ACTDEP024) (ACTDEP035) (ACTDEP048) Generate:

(ACTDEP006) (ACTDEP015) (ACTDEP025) (ACTDEP036) (VCDSCD062) Produce:

(ACTDEP007) (ACTDEP016) (ACTDEP026) (ACTDEP037) (ACTDEP050) Evaluate:

(ACTDEP008) (ACTDEP017) (ACTDEP027) (ACTDEP038) (ACTDEP051)

Australian Curriculum / Visual Art / Years 11-12

Syllabus Objectives:

1. implement ideas and representations
3. analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in artworks and practices
4. evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures and theories
5. justify viewpoints
6. experiment in response to stimulus
7. create meaning through the knowledge and understanding of materials, techniques, technologies and art processes
8. realise responses to communicate meaning

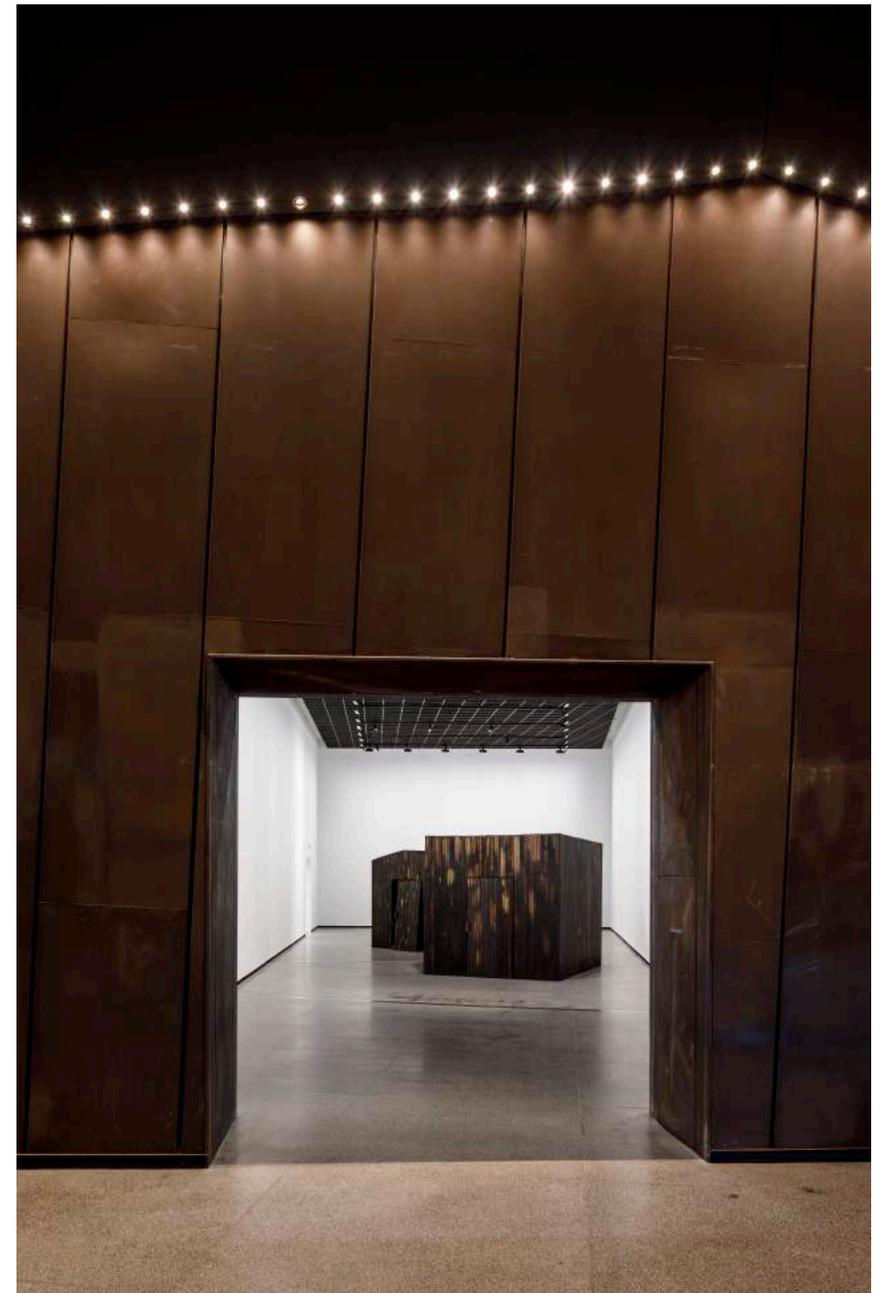
## For Teachers

### Curriculum interpretation

This activity is inspired by Yhonnie Scarce's installation *Missile Park 2021* and the personal, cultural, ancestral and historical references within this work. This activity is intended to get students thinking meaningfully about the unique nature and importance of Indigenous peoples' connection to Country. By exploring their own relationship to a place significant to them, this activity is intended to enhance understanding and empathy for Indigenous peoples' connection to Country, and how that connection can be a powerful inspiration for artworks. Students are encouraged to manipulate and experiment with cardboard and specific joining techniques to create an outcome that references both their built environment, and their personal history and that of their community. This activity is intended to help students to understand how an artist has used their various reference points as inspiration and material for the creation of a contemporary artwork.

By undertaking these activities, students:

- investigate their built environment, their lives, families, and ancestry.
- select and experiment with forms, styles, materials, and technologies.
- apply specific joining techniques to create a 3D artwork.
- reflect on artworks created in the gallery and the classroom.
- explore how personal, cultural, ancestral and historical references can be used to generate inspiration for artwork.
- observe how others' experiences of family and ancestry are inspiration for their art.
- exercise close looking and observation of found images as the basis for imaginative and creative responses.
- transform their observations and ideas into visual forms and symbolic imagery.  
use expressive and imaginative vocabulary to communicate their
- visual expression and the design process.



Image

Yhonnie Scarce, *Missile Park 2021*, installation view, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne. Photograph: Andrew Curtis

## Terms of Use

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## Acknowledgements

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## Visiting IMA

IMA's Education programs are FREE and available for primary, secondary and tertiary groups on weekdays during exhibition seasons. Bookings are required for both guided and self-guided school and tertiary groups.

## Contact Us

(07) 3252 5750  
education@ima.org.au  
ima.org.au/education

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