

the
churchie
emerging art prize

27 May-19 August 2023

Education Kit

Churchie.

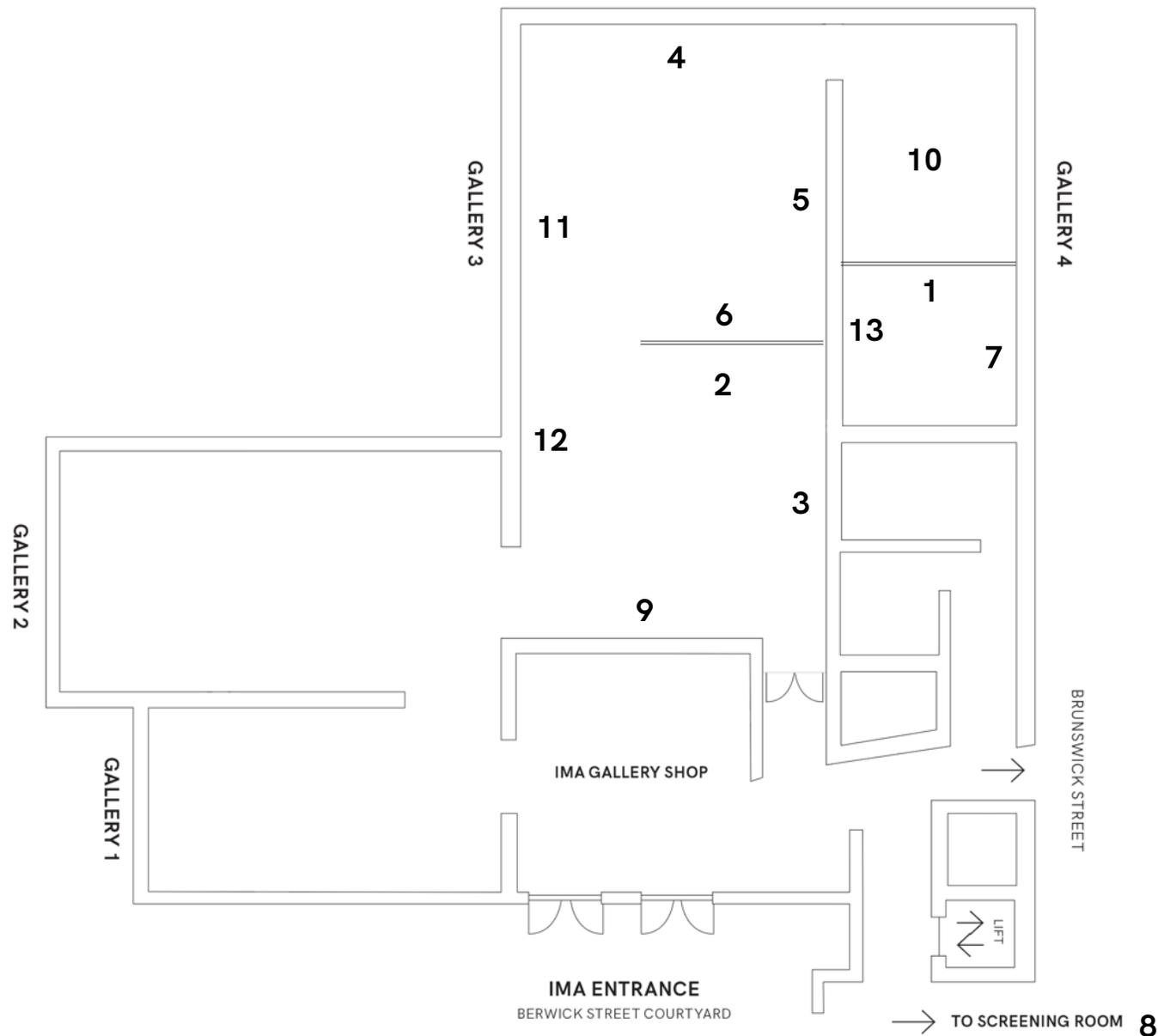
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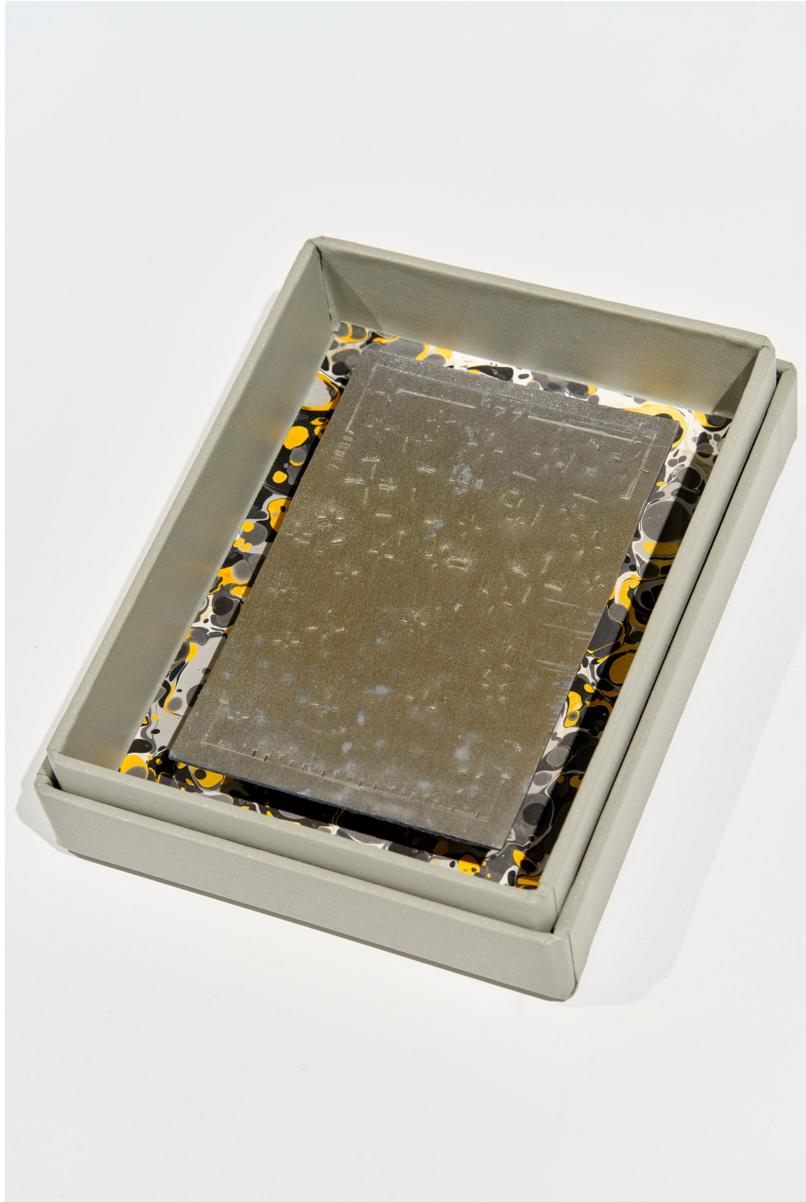
How to Use This Resource

This education kit has been developed for use alongside viewing the exhibition *the churchie emerging art prize 2023* at the Institute of Modern Art (IMA). Teachers can adapt the curriculum-linked questions and activities provided within this resource for learning experiences in the gallery or classroom. Key terms are highlighted throughout the text and definitions at the end of the resource.

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Ash Tower *Ord[i]nance III* 2023, lead, marbled paper, archive box.

About the Exhibition

Curated by Sebastian Henry-Jones

Now in its thirty-sixth year, 'the churchie' has become one of Australia's leading prizes for emerging artists across Australia, with a \$25,000 prize pool. Established by Anglican Church Grammar School in 1987, it is renowned for showcasing new waves of early-career artists.

This year, the exhibition features works by thirteen finalists, curated by Sebastian Henry-Jones. It spans painting, sculpture, video, drawing, printmaking, and photography, in an examination of the theme of context.

'The exhibition is organised around the theme of context, recognising that artists' practices are linked to particularities of time and place—to the cultural, social, economic, and historic conditions that shape their lives on this continent', says Henry-Jones.

The artists each present new, unique perspectives, examining their own experiences and connections to place, history, Country, and time.

Artist

Philippines-born and Naarm/Melbourne-based, Alrey Batol is inspired by the Situationists and by the anarchist philosophy of 'prefigurative politics'—direct action in creating a world that one would like to see.

Alrey Batol



Cooking and Heating, 2019–22, recycled metal, hand-sourced clay, homemade concrete, crushed glass. Photo: David Creed.

Artwork

Inspired by DIY aesthetics, Alrey Batol makes cookers and heaters using recycled and home-sourced materials: clay, crushed glass from beer bottles, concrete with homemade cement.

He says, 'The works remind me of my upbringing in Philippines, where heating and cooking are still being done the old way, with fire fuelled by friendlier sources such as kindling.'

Gallery Discussion

- **Contemporary context:** Batol considers the ethical responsibility of artists today. How does his choice of materials communicate this?
- **Personal context:** Batol expresses his personal view regarding 'prefigurative' politics. Do you think we have a responsibility to *be* the change we hope to see in the world?

Classroom Activities

- **Create** a visual metaphor for sustainability by making an artwork from ethically sourced or repurposed materials.
- Research the anarchist philosophy of 'prefigurative' politics. What is the main objective of this political strategy? Share and **discuss** your findings with a peer.

Amanda Bennetts

Artist

Amanda Bennetts is a Sunshine Coast-based artist. Living with a progressive neurological disease, she draws on this experience to explore issues relating to illness and disability, examining what it means to be an ill-body in the world. Her installations incorporate video, sound, and mass-produced objects exemplifying clinical and disability aesthetics.



The Spectacle of the Antagonist, 2022. Multi channel video installation. Photo: Louis Lim

Artwork

Amanda Bennetts challenges social norms that prioritise able-bodied wellness. With its rabid montage of found movie footage, her video installation *The Spectacle of the Antagonist* exposes the celebration of able-bodied protagonists in contrast with the short-lived spectacle of illness in popular culture.

Gallery Discussion

- **Formal context:** How do Bennetts's juxtapositions of found images communicate meaning?
- **Contemporary context:** Bennetts comments on social norms surrounding sickness and disability. What impact does the centralisation of 'wellness as a default' have on those living through such challenges?

Classroom Activities

- How would you **create** a work that challenges social norms? Assemble an installation of three objects or materials to communicate your personal view.
- Bennetts's works incorporate sound to enhance meaning. **Create** a soundscape to enhance the meaning of your installation.

Artist

Dylan Bolger (Maiawali, Karuwali, Pitta-Pitta, and Gomeroi) is an artist and architectural technician based in Meanjin/Brisbane. He prioritises representing his people, creating works that promote awareness of their rich culture. He often creates highly visible public artworks, working to remember and restore culture in collective consciousness.

Dylan Bolger



Sixty Two, Sixty Three, Sixty Four 2023, paint and stain on plywood.

Artwork

Dylan Bolger uses a macaranga-leaf motif to explore resilience and Blakness. This ancient plant is considered a recoloniser or pioneer plant, meaning that, after devastation, it will be one of the first to grow back. Bolger says, 'I use the macaranga leaf to represent my people and culture as being of an "old-world genesis" as we grow back through the devastation of colonisation.'

Gallery Discussion

- **Cultural context:** The macaranga leaf acts as a metaphor for the resilience of Indigenous peoples through colonisation. What symbol could be used to tell the story of your ancestors?
- **Formal context:** Bolger's works bring together architecture and Country. How would the meaning of this work change if it were exhibited in a natural environment?

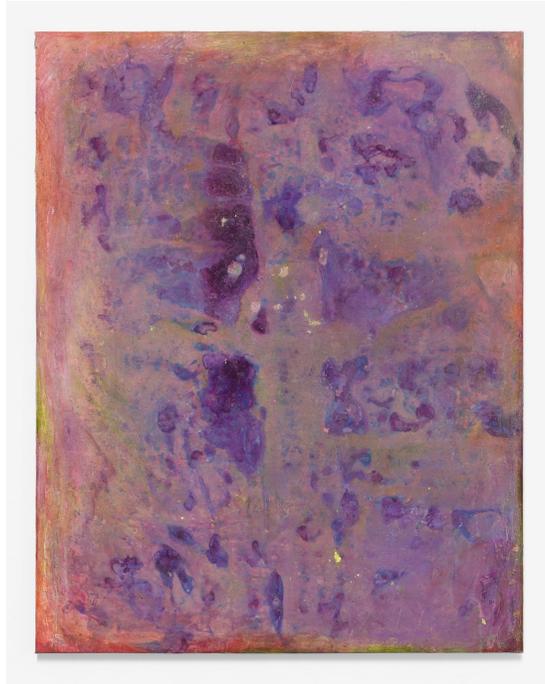
Classroom Activities

- Research how ecosystems bounce back after disasters.
- In your chosen medium, use your research to **design** a symbol that communicates the resilience of the natural world.

Artist

Luke Brennan uses organic materials and biomorphic forms to disrupt the flat surface of his paintings. Repeated cycles of creation and reduction obliterate any trace of his hand and process. His paintings appear degraded but densely layered, like relics.

Luke Brennan



Untitled (Tears) 2022, acrylic, oil paint, coloured pencil, raw pigment, and wax on canvas.

Artwork

Luke Brennan's titles refer to organic and chemical processes. *Untitled (SMAC 273)* references second mitochondria-derived activator of caspases, a protein that triggers the disassembly of cells. SMAC is present in tumour growth but has also been developed and enhanced for the treatment of cancer.

Gallery Discussion

- **Formal context:** How does the artist's process comment on preconceived ideas of beauty?
- **Contemporary context:** How does Brennan use alternate methods to push the boundaries of traditional painting?

Classroom Activities

- Prepare a canvas for painting by applying wax to the surface and manipulating it before it dries. **Consider** methods to scrape, stretch, or move the wax.
- Research two contemporary painters. What are the prominent visual codes you observe in their work? **Justify** your thinking in a short paragraph.

Artist

Perth's Matthew Brown explore modes of display to engage with and present ad-hoc assemblages of strange data and image-objects made accessible by the World Wide Web.

Matthew Brown



Exodia (#ClaireBishopArtCritic) 2023, found and digitally collected 'dragon' image-objects, sublimation print on vinyl, inkjet and laser prints on paper, video.

Artwork

Matthew Brown documents the proliferation of dragon-image objects, made accessible and collectible through the internet. He observes their status shift from high culture to kitsch, from mythological to quotidian. Through materialising, curating, and presenting the immaterial (both dragons and the internet), his work promotes the subversive potential of 'subjective' fan-oriented collecting, as opposed to 'objective' institutional modes of archiving and museum display.

Gallery Discussion

- **Contemporary context:** Brown is interested in the availability of data and objects through the internet. **Discuss** how value changes when something becomes readily available via public access.
- How is the artist's **contemporary context** reflected in their selection of materials and display techniques?

Classroom Activities

- Collect five kitsch objects. **Experiment** by creating an assemblage artwork that repositions kitsch as a high-culture commodity.
- What is art? Research the history of readymade objects in art.

Artist

Based in Naarm/Melbourne, Raf McDonald work takes a queer approach to painting by attending to colours, textures, improvisations, and handmade materials. These processes lead the artist to imagine and propose different ways of relating; to each other; our environments and non-human beings.

Raf McDonald



Sand Dune a Dog, and a Knot in Motion 2023, alum, soda ash, vinegar, guar gum, xananth gum, clay, egg, sodium carbonate, citric acid, latex glue, magnesium sulfate, madder root, onion skin dye, cow dung, synthetic dye, woad dye, soil, raw canvas, repurposed cotton sheet, thread.

Artwork

Raf McDonald buried *Sand Dune a Dog, and a Knot in Motion* in their backyard, inviting the earth to contribute to the work. The painting depicts a dog and a person, who emerge through reactive dyes and in mould lines where microbial matter grew, interacting with the rice glue bonded to the cotton. McDonald says, 'By turning toward an animal frequency, we can tune into other life histories, and reflect on aspects of climate, topography, hydrology, soils, vegetation, migration, class, and rental and husbandry laws shaping the 'backyard''.'

Gallery Discussion

- **Formal context:** What symbols and motifs do you recognise in the work and what could they communicate to an audience?
- **Formal context:** What formal codes connect these works?

Classroom Activities

- **Create** a series of line drawings on tracing paper. Layer these by adding colour and pattern to selected layers, experimenting with the different pictorial planes.
- Working on fabric, **create** an experimental artwork by staining it with unconventional pigments.

Corben Mudjandi

Artist

Corben Mudjandi is a traditional owner of Jabiru, as well as parts of Kakadu and West Arnhem. He was born in Darwin, and, in his younger years, moved between Jabiru, Barunga, Darwin, and Katherine. In 2013, Corben's family decided to stay put in Jabiru on Mirarr land.



Night-Time Hitchhike 2022, inkjet print.

Artwork

Corben Mudjandi's photographs explore living on Country and the isolation he has faced. *Davis*, *Light-Night Thoughts*, and *Night-Time Hitchhike* are analogue photographs depicting a lone figure at night. Mudjandi says, 'I really like taking night shots. My favourite part of photography is capturing night atmosphere. There's something about how the camera captures light in the dark. It's what I enjoy most.'

Gallery Discussion

- **Personal context:** How does the artist use symbolism to communicate personal narratives?
- **Cultural context:** As a traditional owner, Mudjandi has a strong connection to country and family. What symbols could be used to represent your relationship with your family?

Classroom Activities

- Take inspiration from Mudjandi's use of visual language to **create** a photographic composition that tells a story.
- **Analyse** how Mudjandi's imagery creates narrative and **compare** how your own visual choices communicate your story.

Artist

Melody Paloma is a writer and artist, based in Naarm/Melbourne. Her writing is the foundation for her art. Her work interrogates colonial aesthetics, infrastructure, and the politics of work.

Melody Paloma



Kitsch Sites 2023, video.

Artwork

Built between 1949 and 1974, the Snowy Mountains Scheme in New South Wales is the largest engineering project ever undertaken in Australia. Despite its environmental and cultural impact, this hydroelectricity and irrigation complex has been promoted as progressive nation building. In her video, however, Paloma combines archival and new footage to interrogate the Scheme's particular brand of settler nativism, invoking colonial figures—such as the battler, the pioneer, the melancholic, and the larrikin—while mobilising nostalgia and nationalism and advancing Indigenous dispossession.

Gallery Discussion

- **Formal context:** How does juxtaposing archival and new footage create meaning?
- **Contemporary context:** What are the links between colonialism and capital?

Classroom Activities

- Research the impact of a significant infrastructure project local to Brisbane, Expo 88. **Examine** through the lens of colonial aesthetics and politics the changes to landscape and culture. **Create** a visual collage response.
- Research kitsch aesthetic concepts through time. **Create** a stop motion film that contrasts between colonialism and capitalism.
- Research the history of The Snowy Mountains Scheme. Was its development ethically justified? **Justify** a viewpoint through your personal lens.

Artist

Based in Melbourne/Narrm, Roberta Joy Rich references her diaspora southern African Cape identity and experiences, interrogating constructs of race, gender, and authenticity. Drawing from communal knowledge systems, history, and popular culture, her projects explore histories of resilience and power. She is interested in reframing archives and an archiving, with the aim of deconstructing colonial modes and empowering narratives of self determination.

Roberta Joy Rich



Lunch with the Family at Mignon Street, Cape Town 2022, video, flatscreen monitor, headphones, fabricated seating. Photo: Jody Haines.

Artwork

Apartheid operated in South Africa between 1948 and 1994. *Lunch with the Family at Mignon Street, Cape Town* is built around a recording of Rich's family at lunch, recounting stories of oppression and resilience under apartheid. She says, 'I hope this installation can serve as a timely interrogation of the underlying conditions of power and exclusion that continue to shape the ways we inhabit public space and reveal our capacity for collective resistance and change.'

Gallery Discussion

- **Personal context:** How does the artist use visual codes and symbols to communicate personal and cultural histories?
- **Formal context:** Rich draws on storytelling. What narrative can you derive from the formal qualities of this work?

Classroom Activities

- What stories do you and your family tell each other during meal times? Record a conversation with your family and use it as stimulus to guide the creation of an art work.
- Research the apartheid in South Africa. What forms of collective resistance and change happened during this time?

Joel Sherwood Spring

Artist

Joel Sherwood Spring is a Wiradjuri artist who examines the contested narratives of Australia's urban cultural and Indigenous history in the face of ongoing colonisation.



Diggermode 2022, video installation.

Artwork

Tracing the material and cultural implications of extraction and storage, Joel Sherwood Spring's two-channel video *Diggermode* addresses the social and environmental ethics of digital technology in constructing, storing, and sharing images—whether in surveillance databases, museum archives, or online. Using artificial intelligence (AI), he created landscapes being torn apart by mining machinery in the style of acclaimed Arrernte artist Albert Namatjira. This work confronts the viewer with uncomfortable and overlooked aspects of our networked age, addressing the possibilities of 'the cloud' and AI in the context of ongoing colonisation.

Gallery Discussion

- **Cultural context:** How do open-access technologies threaten cultural belonging?
- **Contemporary context:** The artist is interested in how we relate to our material world. Do technologies that contain minerals also contain histories of the land from which they were mined?

Classroom Activities

- By using AI to digitally develop landscapes in the style of Albert Namatjira, Spring questions the ethics of technology. **Create** your own AI-assisted landscape.
- Who is the author of the work you just created? **Justify** your thinking with two points to support your opinion.

Artist

Based in Boorloo, Jess Tan explores how materials morph through ongoing reconfiguration, generating unfamiliar ways of knowing and understanding through their affective capacities.

Jess Tan



Extended Stretch/Semicircular Canal (La-La-La-La-La-La) 2022. Photo: Jack Ball.

Artwork

Jess Tan works with material fragments she has encountered and collected while walking and eating, being and noticing. In her installations, these materials accumulate in iterative arrangements that follow their own logic. In her work, Tan imagines the fragment as 'an open proposition; a subtle punctuation of possibility that pieces together a composition of material organs and emotions; a hug, a dance, or a long extended stretch outwards'.

Gallery Discussion

- **Cultural context:** What could repurposing broken and found objects communicate about our current society?
- **Contemporary context:** How does being in a gallery change the meaning of objects?

Classroom Activities

- Collect three broken or found objects from your local environment to create a small still-life composition. From this composition, **create** a series of sustained drawings focusing on the elements of line and tone.
- Looking at an object of perceived value, recreate this object using repurposed or found materials.

Debbie Taylor Worley

Artist

Debbie Taylor Worley creates site-specific earth and water-based works while spending time upon her ancestral Gamilaraay land. Her work includes symbols used in 'women's business' rituals associated with her Gamilaraay and coloniser heritage.



Mehi River and Warialda Red and Matriarch of the Mehi 2022, canvas, ochre and earth, pigment, gold thread, recycled timber.
Photo: Mike Terry.

Artwork

Debbie Taylor Worley describes her work as 'an immersion into Baayangali, the nature of all things'. She adds, 'I contemplated the memories of ancestors held in the water that bubbled over the rocky beds of the creeks. I thought of the stories they must hold and wondered of the lessons I was still to learn.' Taylor Worley responds to Country by soaking canvasses in creeks, rivers, and lakes, pooling pigment over them, then working in local ochres, clays, and muds, and charcoal from recent bushfires. Alongside them, she hangs smaller, similarly prepared canvases with charcoal rubbings of ancient trees near each waterway, embroidering them with gold thread, representing the gold found around Nundle, which is known as 'the Hills of Gold'.

Gallery Discussion

- **Formal context:** How do materials foraged from the land bridge a gap between the artist and her ancestors?
- **Contemporary context:** Taylor Worley aims to confront and decolonise colonial narratives. Why is the retelling of dark histories important today?

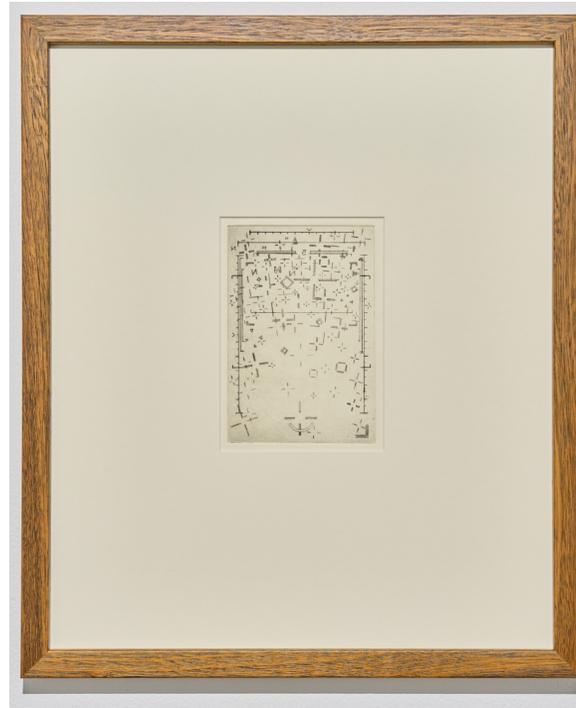
Classroom Activities

- Take a large piece of paper out into your local environment. Using only found materials, **create** an abstract series of layered marks.
- **Evaluate** how your mark making acts as a code for your chosen site.

Artist

Ash Tower is based on Kaurna Country, South Australia. His work combines architecture, archaeology, and history to investigate how knowledge is constructed. His most recent work explores the relationship between nuclear technology and funerary architecture.

Ash Tower



Neon Genesis 2022, copperplate etching.

Artwork

The ancient Romans created defixiones—magical curses seeking justice or vengeance inscribed on lead. *Ord[i]nance* replaces the Latin script with accumulated crosshairs from drone viewfinders. This shift replaces the traditional divine gaze with a more ominous vision from above, undermining the apparent righteousness of recent geopolitical conflicts. *Neon Genesis* flattens this accumulation into a 'user interface', invoking the distance and separation of contemporary warfare, suggesting a conflict waged through screens, markets, and other sinister proxies.

Gallery Discussion

- Tower's work interrogates the ways we construct knowledge. What is knowledge and how do we test its accuracy?
- **Contemporary context:** Why is it important to question the histories we are taught?

Classroom Activities

- **Create** an artwork that reimagines a historical 'fact' through a contemporary lens.
- Research and **compare** the history of 26 January from the perspective of colonisers, versus the Indigenous population of Australia.

Key Terms

- **Anarchiving** As repositories of culture and knowledge, archives are linked with colonial power and control. Anarchiving counters this, by interrogating what constitutes an archive and the selective practices that erase particular subjects.
- **Artificial Intelligence** Digital computers or computer-controlled robots perform tasks commonly associated with intelligent beings.
- **Biomorphic forms** Artistic design elements modelled on naturally occurring patterns, or shapes reminiscent of nature and living organisms.
- **Contemporary context** The contemporary context informs the analysis and interpretation of past and present artwork through a lens of 21st century art ideas and issues, and how these challenge engagement, communication and meaning.
- **Cultural context** The cultural context informs the analysis and interpretation of the social influences and representations of time, place, politics, purpose, ethnicity, gender and spiritual and secular beliefs on artwork, and how these contribute to engagement, communication and meaning.
- **Diaspora** People who have been dispersed from their homeland.
- **Formal context** The formal context informs the analysis and interpretation of formal visual art elements and principles, the application of materials and techniques, the stylistic qualities relative to historical periods or iconology seen in artworks, and how these contribute to engagement, communication and meaning.
- **Funerary architecture** Architecture produced by societies whose belief in the afterlife is materialistic, and by individuals who want to perpetuate and symbolise their temporal importance.
- **Guileless** Innocent and without deception.
- **Janky** Of poor or unreliable quality.
- **Kitsch** Art and design perceived as naïve imitation, overly eccentric, gratuitous, or of bad or banal taste.
- **Personal context** The personal context informs the analysis and interpretation of emotions, sensory experiences, personal philosophy, beliefs and ideas that are reflected in artworks, and how these contribute to engagement, communication and meaning.
- **Prefigurative politics** The deliberate experimental implementation of desired future social relations and practices in the here-and-now.
- **Quotidian** Every day.
- **Situationists** A group of artists, writers, and social critics (1957–72) who aimed to eliminate capitalism through revolutionising everyday life. The situationists argued that everyday life would provide grounds for revolution, because the alienating effects of capitalism were pervasive in modern society.
- **Snowy Mountains Scheme** A hydroelectric and irrigation complex in southeast Australia. Also known as the Snowy Hydro or the Snowy Scheme.

Cognitive Verbs

- **Analyse** Examine or consider something in order to explain and interpret it, for the purpose of finding meaning or relationships and identifying patterns, similarities and differences
- **Compare** Display recognition of similarities and differences and recognise the significance of these similarities and differences
- **Consider** Think deliberately or carefully about something, typically before making a decision; take something into account when making a judgment; view attentively or scrutinise; reflect on
- **Create** Bring something into being or existence; produce or evolve from one's own thought or imagination; reorganise or put elements together into a new pattern or structure or to form a coherent or functional whole
- **Design** Produce a plan, simulation, model or similar; plan, form or conceive in the mind
- **Discuss** Examine by argument; sift the considerations for and against; debate; talk or write about a topic, including a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses; consider, taking into account different issues and ideas, points for and/or against, and supporting opinions or conclusions with evidence
- **Examine** Investigate, inspect or scrutinise; inquire or search into; consider or discuss an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue
- **Evaluate** Make an appraisal by weighing up or assessing strengths, implications and limitations; make judgments about ideas, works, solutions or methods in relation to selected criteria; examine and determine the merit, value or significance of something, based on criteria
- **Justify** Give reasons or evidence to support an answer, response or conclusion; show or prove how an argument, statement or conclusion is right or reasonable
- **Experiment** Try out or test new ideas or methods, especially in order to discover or prove something; undertake or perform a scientific procedure to test a hypothesis, make a discovery or demonstrate a known fact



Curriculum Links

Australian Curriculum / Visual Art / Years 11-2 Syllabus Objectives

- implement ideas and representations
- apply literacy skills
- analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in art
- evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories
- experiment in response to stimulus
- create meaning through the knowledge and understanding of art materials, techniques, technologies, and processes
- realise responses to communicate meaning

Australian Curriculum / Visual Arts / Years P-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 works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (ACAVAM106) (ACAVAM110) (ACAVAM114)

Respond to art works and consider where and why people make them, including visual art works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (ACAVAR109) (ACAVAR113) (ACAVAR117)

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

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

Luke Brennan *Untitled (Tears)* 2022, acrylic, oil paint, coloured pencil, raw pigment, and wax on canvas.

Further Resources

[Alrey Batol BNE website](#)

[Jess Tan artist website](#)

Joel Sherwood Spring [Diggermode muses the ethics of technology](#)

[Raf McDonald artist website](#)

the churchie emerging art prize 2023 resources are available via the [IMA Resources Webpage](#)

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