

# *Irresistible*

THE VADEA EDUCATION KIT 2012

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**“ IRRESISTIBLE OPTIONS ”**

AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART  
IN THE VISUAL ARTS CLASSROOM

# Irresistible

IRRESISTIBLE OPTIONS

AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART  
IN THE VISUAL ARTS CLASSROOM

*Irresistible Options* is a collection of resources written by art teachers for art teachers. Designed to complement the presentations given by some of Australia's finest contemporary artists at the 2012 VADEA Conference *Irresistible*, these resources have been developed to enhance quality teaching in the 7-12 Visual Arts classroom.

The teachers who have developed these *Irresistible Options* acknowledge that quality curriculum and pedagogy in Visual Arts education is necessarily informed by real practices in the Visual Arts. The authors have been generously supported by the artists and associated institutions in the development of these resources. Links to primary and secondary sources including websites, key images, critical commentary, historical accounts, gallery sites and other information enliven these resources for classroom practice. Many of the suggested approaches to learning and teaching represent adaptations to the practices of artists, critics and historians. This approach highlights the central role teachers have in interpreting artworld practices for the Visual Arts classroom using the content of the Conceptual Framework, Practice and the Frames.

Kathrine Kyriacou's investigations Hossein Valmanesh practice encourage teachers to focus on art historical practice. Using a variety of interpretative perspectives students adopt the role of an art historian to investigate how Valmanesh's work can be explained. These activities build students' understanding of how to develop historical interpretations using evidence from source material.

Sally Leaney's exploration of Lindy Lee's practice provides a cultural orientation for teachers. A wide variety of source material assists understanding of the centrality of Lee's Chinese heritage to her artmaking practice. The concepts of identity, spirituality and the self frame investigations of Lee's intentions and motives as an artist. Suggested artmaking activities encourage students to adopt these ideas in working with a range of forms.

Hannah Burns' presents an array of ways teachers can interpret the work of Susan Norrie. Mapped to Visual Arts content, teachers are provided with support to frame interpretations of Norrie's work as a form of political, social and environmental activism. Investigations of film stills by Norrie develop students' critical understandings of 4D forms of art. Activities focus on how Norrie uses metaphor, references to history and conventions of film making to take a slant in her practice.

Emma Barry suggests a range of investigations focusing on the practice of Agatha Gothe-Snape. With the concept of collaboration central to this artist's practice, teachers are introduced to possibilities for collaborative classroom investigations in art making, criticism and history. Concepts including strategies, actions and motives highlight the ways students can interpret the particularities of Gothe-Snape's interactive practice as an artist.

Karen King examines the role of the artist as provocateur. Brook Andrew's practice is interpreted through the lens of a postmodern perspective. Teachers are supported in examining how Andrew focuses on dialogue in his artworks as a means of interrogating or questioning colonial and post-colonial assumptions in the field of art and the broader cultural context.

These resources showcase not only the richness of Australian Contemporary Art, but how NSW Visual Arts syllabuses unequivocally support teachers' work with students in the classroom.

In keeping with our aims I am reassured that the *Irresistible Options* herein promote the development of intellectual autonomy in the minds of students we teach – the factor which distinguishes our syllabuses, our teaching practices and outcomes for students as world-class.

Dr Karen Maras  
VADEA Co-President – Professional Development



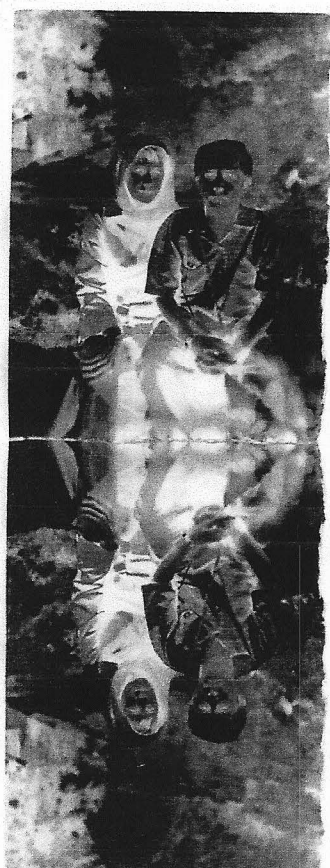
### Art historical / critical practice can be defined as:

- researching and collecting data;
- identifying and interrogating perspectives evident in art writing using the Frames;
- explaining why historians/critics or other agencies of the art-world come to have different perspectives;
- comparing and evaluating sources and perspectives;
- using a range of resources to develop and test historical hypotheses; and
- applying an awareness of the Frames when writing well-reasoned critical accounts of artists /artworks/ art-world/ audiences (students may describe, argue, discuss, debate, evaluate, analyse, speculate, judge).

Art historians work with **primary** and **secondary** sources.

**Primary sources** reflect the individual view-point of a participant or 'first-hand' observer of the event you are researching.

**Secondary sources** interpret or analyse primary sources, and other sources to construct a more impersonal, 'second-hand' view of an event.



*On Reflection,*  
2004 digital print  
on watercolour  
paper, framed,  
edition of 7 180 x  
90cm .

Image courtesy of  
Greenaway Art  
Gallery.

This image depicts  
Hossein and Ange-  
la Valamanesh.

### About the artist:

Hossein Valamanesh is one of Australia's best known contemporary artists. He works in a range of diverse media including installation, collage, sculpture, photography and painting. He was born in Iran in 1949 and after completing art training in Tehran he immigrated to Australia in 1973. Valamanesh then completed further studies at the South Australian School of Art.

Valamanesh explores the two worlds of his own cultural heritage in his works: that of his birth country, Iran, and that of his adopted country, Australia. He has exhibited frequently in Australia and overseas and has received numerous awards. Valamanesh completed an artist residency at the Aomori Contemporary Art Center in Japan in 2007 and exhibited extensively there.

Valamanesh is married to the highly respected contemporary ceramic artist Angela Valamanesh. Together they have collaborated on many projects that explore memory, imagination and spirituality. One example of their work is the *Memorial to the Great Irish Famine, An Gorta Mor (the Great Hunger)*, at Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney. This site specific work conveys the experiences of young Irish women who fled the great famine of the 1840s.

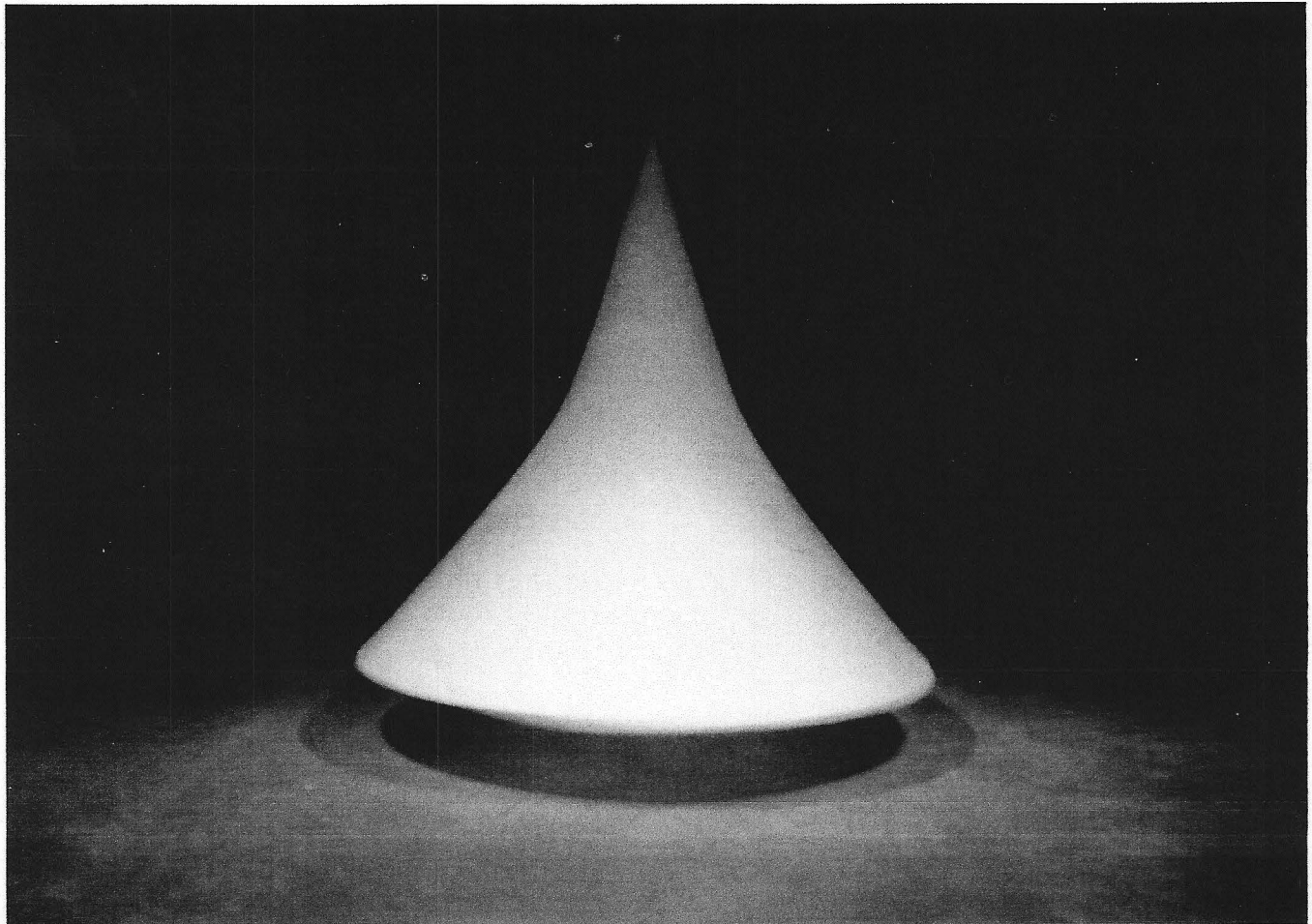
Angela and Hossein Valamanesh each received a Member of the Order of Australia Award in 2010.

### CLASS ACTIVITY Primary and Secondary

**Sources:** make a list on the board of all of the primary and secondary sources that an art historian might use. Then divide this list up. Remember to consider: the artwork/s, the catalogue, newspaper articles, journals, interviews, artist diaries, auction catalogues/records etc.

Note: What counts as a primary or secondary source for an historian depends on what the historian wants to study. For example, if an historian wants to write about a specific artwork, then her primary sources would include the work itself, and the notes, diary entries and recordings of the artist at work.

However, if she wants to write about the impact of a famous exhibition, then she might use critics' writings as her primary sources.



Hossein Valamanesh, *The lover circles his own heart* 1993, silk, electric motor, foam, brass rod, stainless steel cable, wood, poem. 210 x 210 x 210 cm. Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with the assistance of Gene and Brian Sherman, Reg and Sally Richardson and the artist, 2005. Image courtesy of MCA Australia.

### The Artwork - Examine Primary Sources:

- **The Work** "The lover circles his own heart", 1993 is on display at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, in Sydney. It is pictured above.
- The artist speaks about his work : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4iAooWuqCE>

This **interview** from MCA Artists Voice Series and Artcine TV is approximately 8 mins in length. In it the artist discusses and demonstrates the work "The Lover Circles his own Heart", 1993. Transcript available in the members' section of the VADEA website.



"We came whirling  
Out of nothingness  
Scattering stars  
Like dust  
It sunders  
All attachments  
Every atom  
Turns bewildered  
Beggars circle tables  
Dogs circle carrion  
The lover circles his own  
heart"

Rumi, 'The lover circles his own heart', Poem quoted by Hossein Valamanesh in Hossein Valamanesh, Artist's Voice series 1, MCA 2005

### Context and Influence: Rumi

Valamanesh states that this work is inspired by his reading of the 13th century poet Rumi who hailed from the Ottoman empire (Turkey).

*"The greatest of the Islamic mystic poets in the Persian language and whose disciples founded an order of mystics known as Whirling Dervishes was Jalal al-Din al-Rumi. The basis of Islamic mysticism, called Sufism in Western languages, is the attempt, by meditation, to comprehend the nature of God and man and to experience the divine presence in the world."*

Encyclopaedia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/299621/Rumi>

The word Dervish literally means "seeking doorways" or connections between the material world and the spiritual world.

### Art Historical Research:

1. Valamanesh claims that the artwork *"The Lover Circles his own heart"*, 1993 was inspired by his fascination with the Islamic poet Rumi. Is this an enduring fascination?

Go the Greenaway Gallery website (<http://www.greenaway.com.au/Artists/Hossein-Valamanesh.html>) and locate several other works by Valamanesh which are also inspired by Rumi's poetry.

Record your findings in a Powerpoint or create a Popplet (<http://popplet.com>). Make sure that you include an image of the artwork, the date it was made, the materials, and for each artwork write a brief statement explaining how the work was influenced by the famous poet Rumi. Carefully examine the artist's statements/ essays and if there is any poetry by Rumi to quote, copy and paste this into your presentation.

2. Write a one page art historical account of the artwork *"The Lover Circles his own heart"*, 1993 referencing the structural and cultural frames.

### Art Historical Research:

Analyse the perspectives evident in the article by Benjamin Genocchio: "Master of vulnerability", *The Weekend Australian*, 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> July 2001, Arts section, p. 21.

This article is available in the Members section of the VADEA website.

Genocchio is a freelance art writer and critic. He travelled to Adelaide to see a survey exhibition of Valamanesh's works and review the exhibition, courtesy of the Art Gallery of South Australia.

1. Highlight all parts of the text that convey subjective responses by the author.

2. Underline in blue any material that relates to a cultural interpretation of the artist and exhibition.

3. In red circle any structural descriptions of the exhibition or artworks.

4. In a coloured pencil underline any post-modern observations that the author makes.

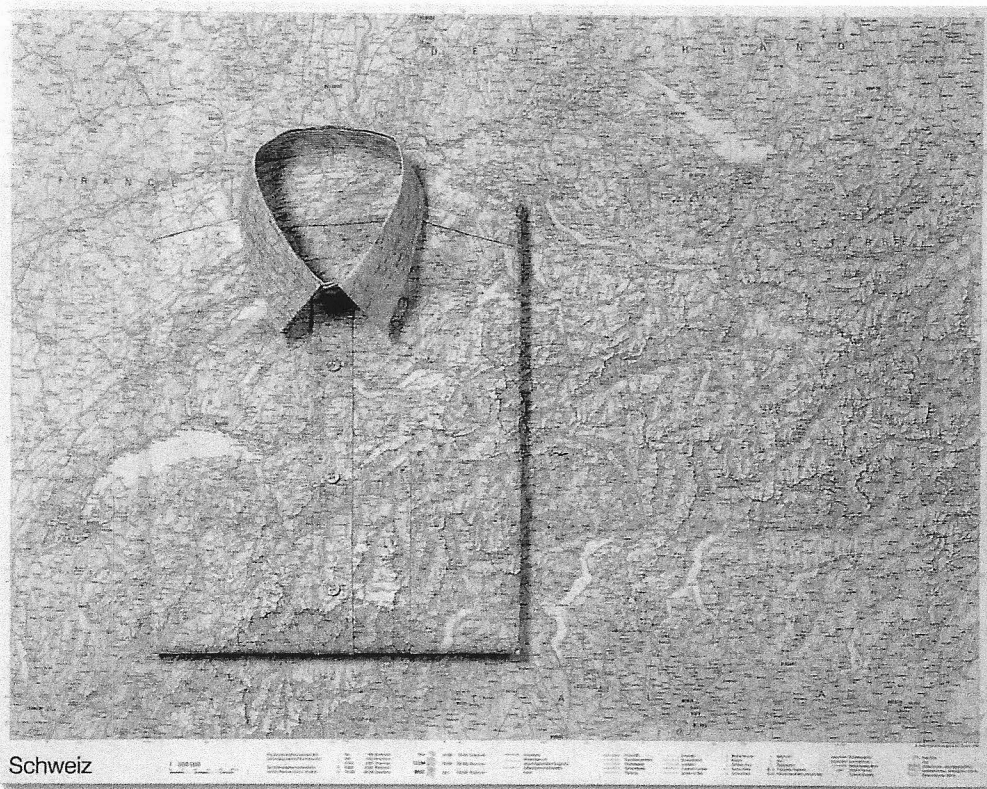
5. In paragraph format, explain Genocchio's art historical/ critical perspective. Refer to the type of responses he uses frequently, use the information provided in the Frames analysis you have just completed as your evidence. Why might Genocchio employ certain perspectives more than others?

*"My inspirations come from very, very personal experiences like daily life and a lot of the physical world also... inspires my work. And what I take out of it is I reflect on what's around me and make it into something tangible"* Hossein Valamenesh

### Art Making Ideas

- Valamanesh has created a series of personal symbols to explore his own feelings about home, belonging and belief. He often works with simple objects / materials such as ladders, stairs, bowls, shoes and earth. Create a visual list of simple objects and materials that reflect your own home and sense of belonging. Sketch each of these in your art diary and consider ways that you might use these objects to create a small work about your personal connection to a place.
- Valamanesh works with maps, folded paper and painted newspaper to reveal stories about places he has visited. Collect paper materials that reflect a place you have been to. This could be a map, postcards, tickets, newspapers, photographs you have scanned. Use these to create a small folded paper artwork. Look at Valamanesh's "Untitled 2002", 2002, paper map on cotton, 62.3 x 77.5 x 7cm for inspiration ( see over page).
- Valamanesh is strongly influenced by the poet Rumi. Is there a short verse or poem that inspires you? Copy it into your art diary. Research and analyse the symbolism in the poem. Choose five objects/ materials to create a simple installation that aims to capture the essence / symbolism of this poem. Sketch and annotate your plans.





Hossein Valamanesh, "Untitled 2002" paper map on cotton, 62.3 x 77.5 x 7cm. 2002. This image was in the Sherman Galleries exhibition 'Travel Tales' 2002. Image courtesy of the Artist.

## The Artwork - Examine

### Primary Sources:

Quote from the catalogue "Travel Tales, Hossein Valamanesh, 2-24 August 2002, Sherman Galleries":

*"Most of the works in this exhibition were created or conceived during a residency last year in Stein am Rhein, in northern Switzerland. The miniatures are derived from autumn leaves collected in this region."*

*"After arriving in Switzerland, I was immediately embraced by the dramatic landscape. I could see this magnificent scenery reproduced in the Swiss market index and published daily in the newspapers. Upon my return to Adelaide, I attempted to paint typical Swiss landscapes within a given perimeter, using the lines that indicated the fluctuation of the market as a boundary for my landscapes."*

Hossein Valamanesh

### Class Activities: Collect old Australian map books (source from second hand shops)

- Ask the students to use pieces of the torn maps and glue (no scissors) to re-create a simple scene on a plain background that represents an Australian location where they have had a memorable holiday. The scene might simply depict a tent and some figures. You could examine artist William Kentridge's collaged silhouette figures on book pages as an alternate reference.
- Use the map paper to make a paper mache moulds of a simple objects that symbolise a place of importance to the students . Perhaps the site can be seen in the map on the surface of the object?
- Ask students to explore the work of paper artist Peter Callesen and consider what kind of object or figure might be cut from and rising out of a map of part of Australia?

### Useful Resources/ Links:

- Monograph: "Hossein Valamanesh: Out of Nothingness" by Mary Knights, Ian North, Hossein Valamanesh. Wakefield Press, 2011. **Extract available** from Wakefield Press Online at : [http://www.wakefieldpress.com.au/files/extracts/Hossein\\_Valamanesh\\_extract.pdf](http://www.wakefieldpress.com.au/files/extracts/Hossein_Valamanesh_extract.pdf)
- Artist statements, images and biographical details- Greenaway Art Gallery : [www.greenaway.com.au](http://www.greenaway.com.au)
- For information about "*The lover circles his own heart*", 1993 including an artist statement- Museum of Contemporary Art Australia: [www.mca.com.au/collection/work/20054a-c/](http://www.mca.com.au/collection/work/20054a-c/)
- The Art Gallery of NSW has four works by Valamanesh in its collection- [www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/search/?artist\\_id=valamanesh-hossein](http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/search/?artist_id=valamanesh-hossein)
- Artlink review of 29 June - 24 July 2005 exhibition at Greenaway Art Gallery : [www.artlink.com.au/](http://www.artlink.com.au/)

### Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Hossein Valamanesh for his support and for providing access to images in this resource.

Thank you to the Greenaway Art Gallery for their assistance with providing images and for making catalogues available to inform this resource.

Thank you to the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia for their assistance with images and resources for members section of the VADEA website.

Thankyou to the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation for their support, advice and assistance and for providing a catalogue for the members section of the VADEA website.

### Available on the VADEA website in the Members lounge:

- ⇒ Transcript of Hossein Valamanesh speaking from the 2005 Artists Voice Series of short films made for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia.
- ⇒ Catalogue from Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation from the exhibition "Hossein Valamanesh 23rd February- 11 March 2006". This catalogue includes an essay on the artist, a self portrait by the artist and his sketches of "*The lover circles his own heart*", 1993.
- ⇒ Article by Benjamin Genocchio: "Master of vulnerability", *The Weekend Australian*, 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> July 2001, Arts section, p. 21.

Kathrine Kyriacou

VADEA NSW CONFERENCE

MAY, 2012

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*“Almost all of my life I’ve been preoccupied with the nature of ‘self’ in the world. For me it has to do with being a divided self—Chinese and Australian—and the feeling of being neither this nor that but both”*  
(Lindy Lee, 2009)

Some useful links and resources:

#### Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

[www.roslynoxley9.com.au](http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au)

The Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery also has some excellent press releases written by the artist and others:

<http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/news/releases/2009/04/23/163/>

#### Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

MCA Insight App for i-Phone.

Explore art from the MCA’s permanent collections as well as temporary exhibitions. The *Marking Time* exhibition (29 March—03 June) includes Lindy Lee’s *Conflagrations from the End of Time* (2011).

#### Lindy Lee. Art After Hours.

02/02/2011

An excellent interview with Lindy Lee and Fenella Kernebone (YouTube)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njlytRXBQwk>

#### C.A.P. (China Art Projects)

Essays by Damian Smith (2010)

<http://www.chinaartprojects.com/lindys-essay/>

#### Australian Art Collector

Lindy Lee: The many faces of Lindy Lee.

Issue 26, October-December 2003

<http://www.artcollector.net.au/lindyLeeTheManyFacesofLindyLee>

# Formations of Identity

## The art practice of Lindy Lee

### Selfhood, identity, spirituality and authenticity

*“Art is about a visual connection to the world but it is also about spirit - the 10,000 experiences that one has that are invisible. Art allows that.”*

(Lindy Lee, 2011)

Lindy Lee is one of Australia’s leading contemporary artists, with a career spanning three decades in Australia and internationally. As a first generation Chinese Australian artist, Lee’s works are informed by an ongoing investigation of selfhood, identity, spirituality and authenticity. Rather than her art making being a search for an identity, Lee’s practice has been integral to her search for an understanding of what identity is.

Lee’s explorations of her place in the world has its ties to a childhood marked by feelings of alienation and division, the artist feeling neither authentically Chinese nor Australian: “We were proudly Chinese at home, but outside we had to conform to...an assimilation that erased our identities. I felt like a White Australian although I didn’t look like one;



Lindy Lee

*Birth and Death*, 2007

Installation view at Campbelltown Art Centre

Inkjet print and acrylic on Chinese accordion books

Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

© the artist

whereas at a Chinese club with my family, for instance, I looked like everyone there but I didn’t feel like them” (Australian Art Collector, 2003). Therefore her investigation of the self relates to being a divided self. She states that the reason she is an artist is that she really does care about knowing what the self is (Art After Hours, 2011). In recent years, her immersion in the discipline of Zen Buddhism has further invigorated her art practice, providing a framework for her explorations of broader universal questions such as ‘who am I?’ and ‘why am I here?’

#### Classroom Connections:

Discuss the following statement using specific examples from Lee’s practice: “All of her work is not about a search for identity but an understanding of what this is”.

In what ways does Lee’s practice help her build an understanding of identity?

Is identity static, unchanging and inherent, or is it shifting, malleable and able to be constructed? How might our own art making practice help us to present aspects of ourselves to an audience?

### *Birth and Death* (2003, 2007)

*“I wanted to see the ocean of faces”.*

*Birth and Death* (2003, 2007) is an installation of approximately 100 freestanding A3 concertina books of prints of Lee’s living and deceased Chinese family. The work traces a history of five generations in transition. Each monochrome face is cropped to a single close-up and set against a red back-

ground. At the end of the installation process, Lee often sits in meditation within the center of the piece. The work was created in response to the passing of her nephew after a long illness, and she states “I wanted to give my nephew a sense of place but I wanted to see the ocean of faces” (Art After Hours, 2011). The work not only traces her family history, but



Lindy Lee

*Birth & Death*, 2003

Installation Artspace, Sydney

Inkjet print and acrylic on Chinese accordion books

Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

speaks of the experiences of loss and transition of her family’s journey from China to Australia over five generations.

# Authenticity, Appropriation and the Self



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## Classroom Connections:

Discuss the value of appropriation and the reproduction in Lee's art making. Explain how the re-contextualised photocopy takes on personal meaning for the artist.

During the first 10-12 years of her practice, Lee investigated notions of authenticity and the original in the visual arts via the appropriation of European master paintings. The works explore the relationship between the copy and the original, and draw on postmodern theory. During the process of art making Lee came to realize

that the copy had become more precious and personal than the original. She states: "I realised I am a really

bad copy and that is good. I am a bad copy because I can't ever be perfectly Chinese...that is the metaphor I was working with. It's about existence too. Everybody will have this. Nothing will ever fulfill the ideal" (Lindy Lee, 2011). Of the method of reproduction in her work she also says "Reproductive art is like me. It doesn't fit into an ideal. So I have a curious affection for print as art. It is its own medium and totally authentic" (Lindy Lee, n.d).



**Lindy Lee**

*The Silence of Painters*, c 1989  
Photocopy and pigment on paper.  
15 panels, each 42 x 29.5 cm  
Museum of Contemporary Art, gift of Loti Smorgon and Victor Smorgon, 1995.  
Image courtesy the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia  
© the artist

## Zen and Cosmos

Alongside the monochrome photographs of family, and the European portrait photocopy appropriations of her earlier works, Lee's practice also encompasses a more painterly approach, and she describes herself as being more of a painter than anything else (Lindy Lee, 2011). The 'accidental' marks of ink splats and wax spills found in her works are inspired by the ancient Chinese practice of 'flung ink' painting, where Ch'an (Zen) Buddhist monks would meditate and then toss the ink from the container. It is believed that the mark left is not the mark of the monk "but the whole

universe in that moment" (Lindy Lee, 2011). "For me it is no accident. The splat is the combination of all the forces in the universe. It's the mark of everything that exists at one particular moment in time, never to be repeated" (ABCI, 2008). Lee continues to experiment with the 'flung ink' technique by splashing searing molten bronze onto the floor of a bronze foundry and collecting the 'drops' for her works. The symbol of fire is an important theme in Buddhist imagery, as fire relates to transformation and being. Lee's practice is, she argues, never arbitrary and always symbolic. She

states that "bronze, wax, painting and colour are always symbolic. Everything has to be deeply felt or deeply connected to. So I never use anything unless I am absolutely driven to" (Lindy Lee, 2011).

## Classroom connections:

Discuss the connection between spontaneity and intentionality in Lee's works. How does she use the spontaneous and unexpected in an intentional and informed manner?

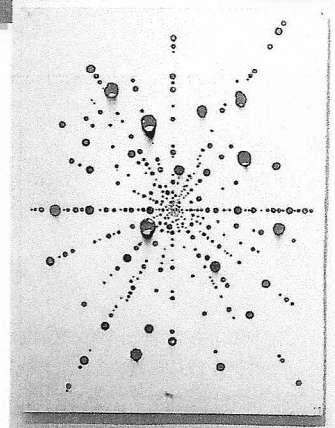
## Conflagrations from the End of Time, MCA Australia

*Conflagrations from the End of Time*, 2009 is a series of 'weather drawings' and suspended scrolls commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia

as part of their *Marking Time* exhibition (29 March—03 June 2012). As part of the artmaking process, Lee has exposed the surface of the works to fire and water,

using a soldering iron to burn the surface and leaving the works in the rain for up to three weeks to cre-

ate a stained and watery appearance. The works appear as constellations and jewel-like nets, and speak of Buddhist teachings relating to time and human existence from birth to death, and regeneration. Within the gallery space, the light penetrating the perforations in the work's surfaces create a shadow play on the walls behind.



**Lindy Lee**

*Conflagrations From the End of Time (4)*  
2009  
paper, fire  
Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
© the artist



# Zen and Meaning

Lee states that her choices in art making are never arbitrary and always intentional and symbolic. The following outlines some of the recurring motifs and meanings found in her works.

**The 'dark'/darkness:** Lee refers to the 'dark' in her 2006 exhibition title *Dark Star*, and it has been a significant feature of her works from early on in her practice. The 'dark' was a key feature in her earlier photocopied appropriations, where the blackened ink from repeated photocopies spoke of issues of diaspora. More recently however the 'dark' refers to Zen concepts of compassion, liberation and freedom from illusion. (See also: Black)

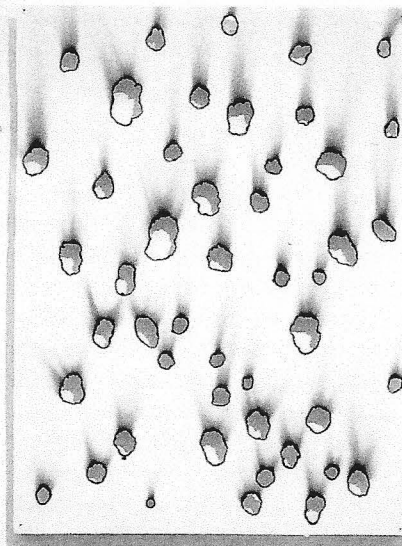
**Flung ink:** Flung ink painting is a traditional Zen Buddhist practice where, after a long period of meditation, Buddhist monks fling ink from containers. The mark made is considered to be made not by the hand of the monk, rather it is representative of the totality of the universe, the sum of all conditions which bring about 'this moment'. Zen artists are not interested in capturing an exact representation of an object or the illusion of reality, rather they seek to find the 'spirit' or nature of the object. Absence of true to life perspective and a focus on purity and simplicity are also a feature of Zen works.

**Molten bronze:** A continuation of Lee's flung ink practice where molten bronze is thrown onto the foundry floor creating 'Flames from the Dragon's Pearl'. (See also: The Dragon).

**The Dragon:** Lee describes the Chinese dragon as being very different to the destructive dragons of Western folklore; the dragons of Chinese culture have immense mythical power and represent the creative energy of the universe. They are symbols of good fortune, benevolence and peace. She also states that they "reside in deep expanses of water but also swim in the winds of the sky. Seen from the earth, they look like slow moving

clouds or lightening flashes. The dragon is the rainmaker but even more importantly, the dragon is the embodiment of cosmic and elemental forces at play—forces which are beyond the realm of human intervention and yet completely material to human existence" (Lindy Lee, 2009) (See also: Dragon's pearl).

**Dragon's Pearl:** Lee states that the dragon is often depicted with a flaming pearl, and this pearl is "symbolic of Qi,

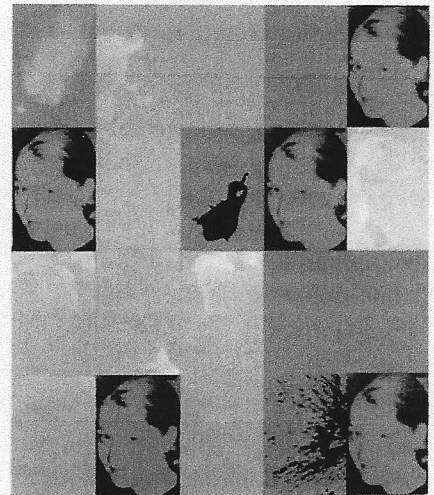


**Lindy Lee**  
*Conflagrations From the End of Time (3)*, 2009  
paper, fire  
76 × 56cm  
Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney  
© the artist

the progenitor of all energy and creation—it is the 'Treasure of Infinite Potentiality' (Lindy Lee, 2009).

**Fire:** In Buddhist tradition, fire is representative of transformation and being. Lee says she "uses fire to invoke something direct and elemental about our existence" (Lindy Lee, 2009)

**Colour:** All of the colours used by Lee have very personal meaning, and their selection is informed by her Zen Buddhist studies. She says: "I use very specific colours. Each colour manifests itself or embodies a constellation of questions that I need to address in relation to my existence. That is why the colours are so intense" (Lindy Lee, 2011).



**Lindy Lee**  
*Nell-dharma*, 2001  
Cat #6. 20 panels  
photocopy, acrylic, oil, wax, and ink on board  
166 × 147cm  
Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

**Black:** Black is the most fundamental of colours. Black represents mystery; the invisible, the unseeing and unseen, and the silent. Black is the absolute concentration of all colour.

**Red:** Red is representative of blood-red vitality and passion, fire, life, fortune and substance.

**Blue:** Lee describes blue as being "deep, vast and introspective, the life of the spirit, translucent and silent, my utopia" (Lee, 2001).

**Purple:** Purple is created by mixing blue and red, and also spirit and matter. It is "dark, murky and rich, uncertain, neither choice nor chance, grit, endurance, reluctance, hesitation, perseverance" (Lindy Lee, 2001).

**Orange:** Lee states that orange is "the black stone at the heart of the universe, pure transmission, gold, the luminosity in each and every thing when given proper attention" (Lindy Lee, 2001).

**Green:** Green is the jade-like colour of life and an oceanic colour.

Content adapted from: Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery's Press Releases.



**Lindy Lee**

*The Silence of Painters*, c 1989

Photocopy and pigment on paper.

15 panels, each 42 x 29.5 cm

Museum of Contemporary Art, gift of Loti Smorgon and Victor Smorgon, 1995

Image courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia



## Classroom Connections - Art making:

### Shadow and light Installation:

Students work with spills or drips of ink and/or wax on large sheets or scrolls of paper. Instruct students to watch where they move their hand while spilling the ink from a few centimeters above the paper, and where the ink actually falls. Ask students to consider the relationship between intentionality and the amount of control over the mark made.

While the ink is still wet, students create perforations in the paper, the holes following some the patterns of the ink. When complete, students hang the paper from the ceiling of the classroom for display and, using a strong light source such as a projector, studio lamp or interactive whiteboard, shine light through the perforated banners, thereby creating a shadow-play on the walls. Observe the effects of light when numerous works are displayed. Discuss the 'spontaneous' act of ink spilling, and how the unexpected effects have contributed to an informed and complete artwork. Discuss how the installation references Lee's Zen approach to art making.

### Digital Self-portraits:

Students take a photograph of their own face and use digital imaging tools such as Photoshop to create a high contrast, closely cropped, mono-colour self-portrait. Students compare the visual impact of their alterations to the original photograph, for example, what effect does the application of intense flat colour, close cropping, or high contrast have on the image? Students may reproduce the image as a multiple portrait by displaying the images in a grid or concertina format, with flat colour segments interspersed between the images. Alternative art forms may include screen-printing and painting.

**Nature of the object.** Zen artists are not interested in capturing an exact representation of an object or the illusion of reality, rather they seek to find the 'spirit' or nature of the object. Absence of true to life perspective and a focus on purity and simplicity are also a feature of Zen works. For this task, select a series of objects which have defining shapes, colours, or functions. Students will seek to capture the 'spirit' or nature of the object by drawing or painting the object's key features; for example using curvilinear, calligraphic lines of ink to capture a rounded vase, or intense swatches of red to depict a red bowl. The drawings will therefore focus on the purity and simplicity of the object, and will show evidence of limited perspective and representational detail. Students may use ink and watercolours, or, in a digital piece, a photograph may be altered by emphasizing flat colours, removing backgrounds, using calligraphic outlines, and/or exaggerating the shape of the object.



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Resource written by Sally Leaney, 2012

### Acknowledgements:

Thank you to the artist, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia for their assistance in producing this resource. All images courtesy the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia. All images © the artist.

Written content has been adapted from the following sources:

[www.roslynoxley9.com.au](http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au) including press releases:  
<http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/news/releases>

Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, MCA Insight App for i-Phone.

Lindy Lee and Fenella Kernebone Interview for Art After Hours 02/02/2011 on YouTube  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=njHytRXBQwk>

[www.abc.net.au/tv/guide/netw/200805/programs/AC0718V006D20052008T220000.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/tv/guide/netw/200805/programs/AC0718V006D20052008T220000.htm)

Australian Art Collector  
Lindy Lee: The many faces of Lindy Lee.  
Issue 26, October-December 2003  
<http://www.artcollector.net.au/LindyLeeTheManyFacesofLindyLee>

## SUSAN NORRIE EDUCATION KIT



Susan Norrie  
*HAVOC* (2007) still from projection

“AS AN ARTIST I ASK QUESTIONS, BUT I DON’T PRETEND TO COME UP WITH THE  
ULTIMATE SOLUTIONS TO A PROBLEM IN OUR ESCHATOLOGICAL WORLD.”

SUSAN NORRIE



“Artists are often romantic revolutionaries and need to perpetuate change.”  
Susan Norrie 2004

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, Susan Norrie has developed a practice that has commented on the environmental and humanitarian catastrophes that have increased due to humankind's intervention into the natural order of our bio diverse and delicate ecosystems.

She is particularly concerned with how mainstream media distorts and suppresses information, thus she sees the role of the artist as a deft storyteller who reveals the truth.

In essence Norrie has been using the film model for many years and her projects are collaborative, but she always maintained her position as the author through her varying roles as director/producer and artist. The uncanny and often predictive aspects of her work are a testament to a vision, which is unique and highly intuitive.

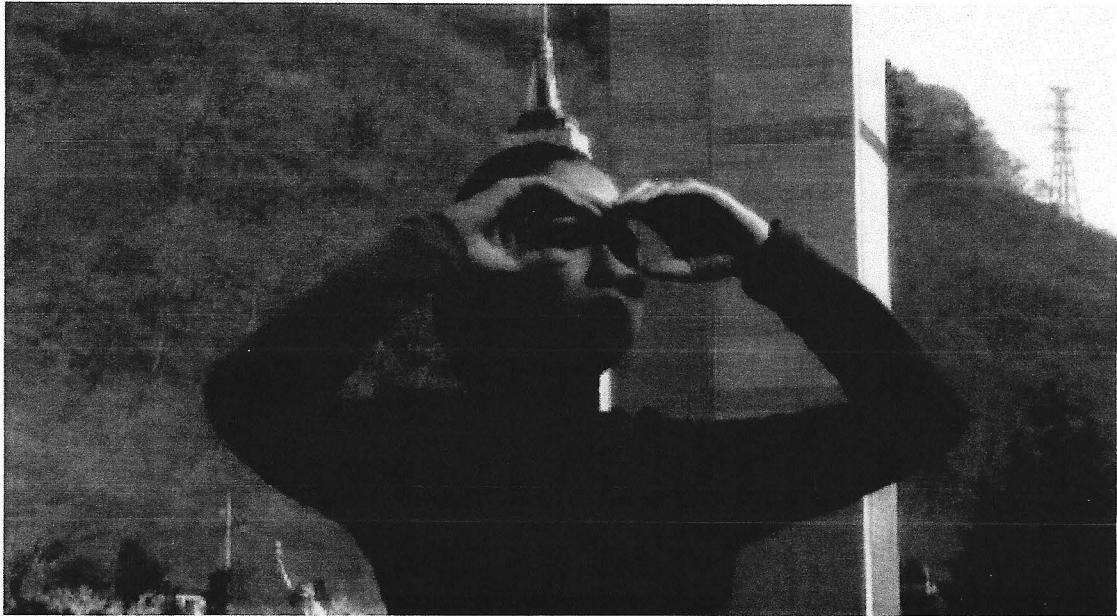
From *UNDERTOW*, 2002; *passenger* 2003; *Enola* 2004; *Black Wind* 2005; to *HAVOC*, an expansive video installation presented at the 52nd Venice Biennale, 2007 and *TRANSIT*, 2011 at the Yokohama Triennale Japan, in this new project Norrie continues her interest in themes of change, survival and hope.

## ARTIST STATEMENT

“The history of natural resources/energy has played a conspicuous role in the history of armed conflict, exploitation of indigenous peoples and their land, and destruction of the environment.

I feel that I am equally interested in the history of art and the history of politics. In many ways this is simply about life and all the art movements I have been influenced by have always been politically motivated and informed by the prevailing conditions of their time. Maybe, one could simply talk about political ecology, in relation to my practice, which is the relationship between political, socio-economic, environmental issues and change. This is why the cinematic image became the most cogent form for expressing my interests in social /political and environmental issues.

My practice considers the balance between the technological and the natural sublime; the spiritual desolation of the digital age, and contemporary ecological destruction. At this moment in history we need a convergence of indigenous ecology, science and technology to enable this world to reconcile our collective demands for energy.”



Susan Norrie  
*ENOLA* (2004) stills from film



## SYLLABUS SUMMARY

### Rationale

Susan Norrie's artworks are sublime images that provide multiple ways for students to understand the role of the artist as an observant film maker and a deeply concerned story teller who suggests, through her films, more responsible approaches to the world.

Norrie makes accessible central environmental concerns, with rich references across film, painting and sculpture to inform students of the evolutionary nature of contemporary art.

The following questions, tasks and activities are primarily based on her most recent works *Transit*, *Havoc*, *Black Wind* and *Enola*. These works have had Venice Biennale and Museum of Contemporary Art education kits developed by the respective institutions. This resource is designed for a Stage 6 Visual Arts or Photographic, Digital Media students. They are only suggested approaches.

### Conceptual Framework

Relationship of **artist** as responsible observer of environmental impacts of the **world**.

The nature of different **audiences to artwork**, specific to cultures and exhibitions.

The **Artist** in collaboration with cinematographer. Artist approaching the **artwork** as a history painting and documentary film.

### Artists Practice

**Concept** of art as advocacy for impoverished communities.

Ideas of ecological disasters, and their connection to mankind's intervention into natural order. Political Ecology as a system to think of the combined effect of world conditions.

**Material** choice of film to reports stories of concern. Montage as a post modern tool to explain multiple voices. Techniques of wide camera angle, panoramic perspectives, referencing history painting, allowing the audience to also become witnesses. The 'cinematic image' as the clearest vehicle of her 'political ecology' ideas.

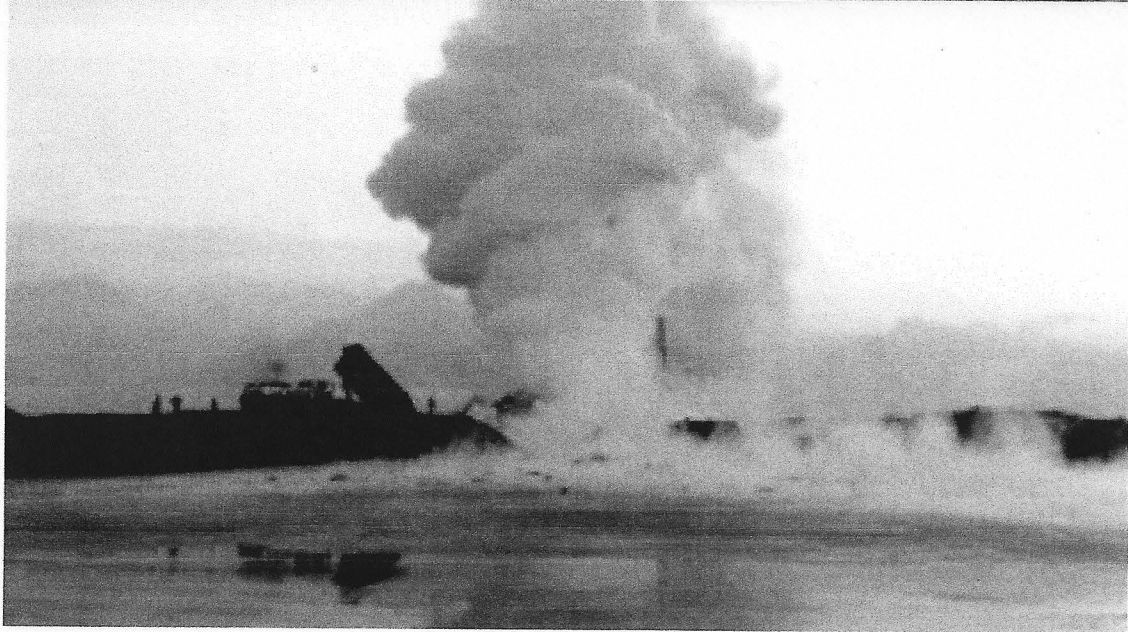
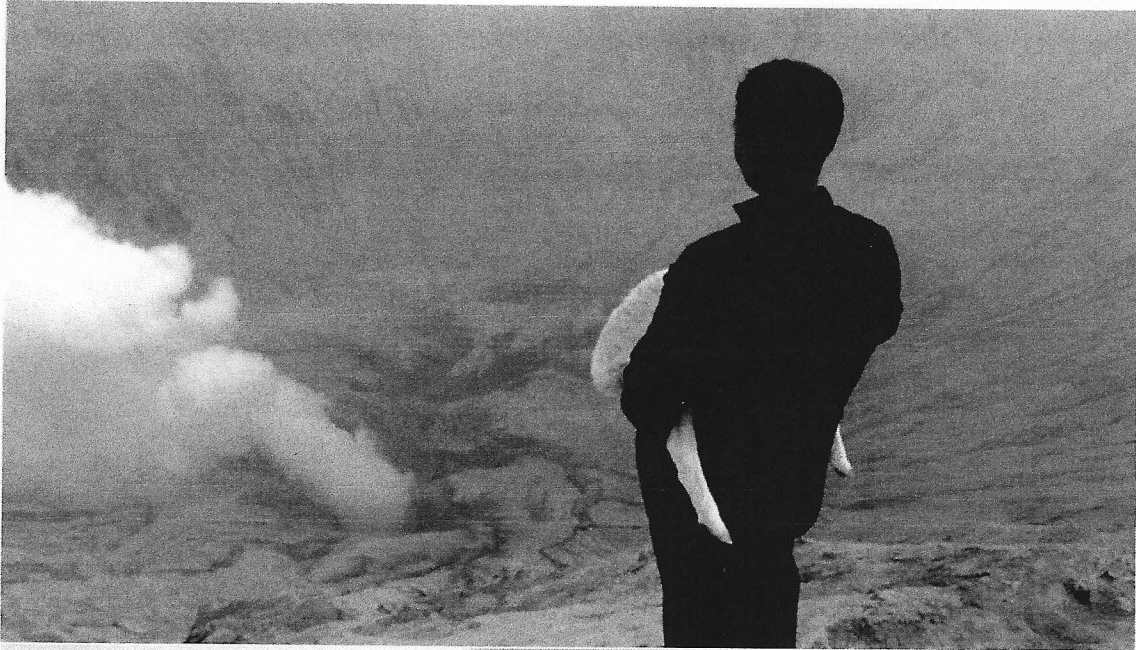
### Frames Investigation

**Structural:** Interpreting Norrie's visual language by researching the art movements; Surrealism, Arte Povera and the montage techniques of the Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein. Students gain an in depth understanding of the compositional devices of the film's visual qualities.

**Cultural:** How the artworks reflect the Global community's concerns about climate change. What identity/character do different human's take on in her films? What could they be symbolising? What impact do political decisions, those made by people in positions of governmental or commercial power, have on the lives of everyday people?

**Post Modern Frame:** The evolving medium of film as a history painting.

Collaboration in Norrie's filmmaking is as a conversational process. The artist is not collaborating just to outsource skills, but listening to locals and colleagues to communicate the most authentic story.



Susan Norrie  
HAVOC (2007) film stills

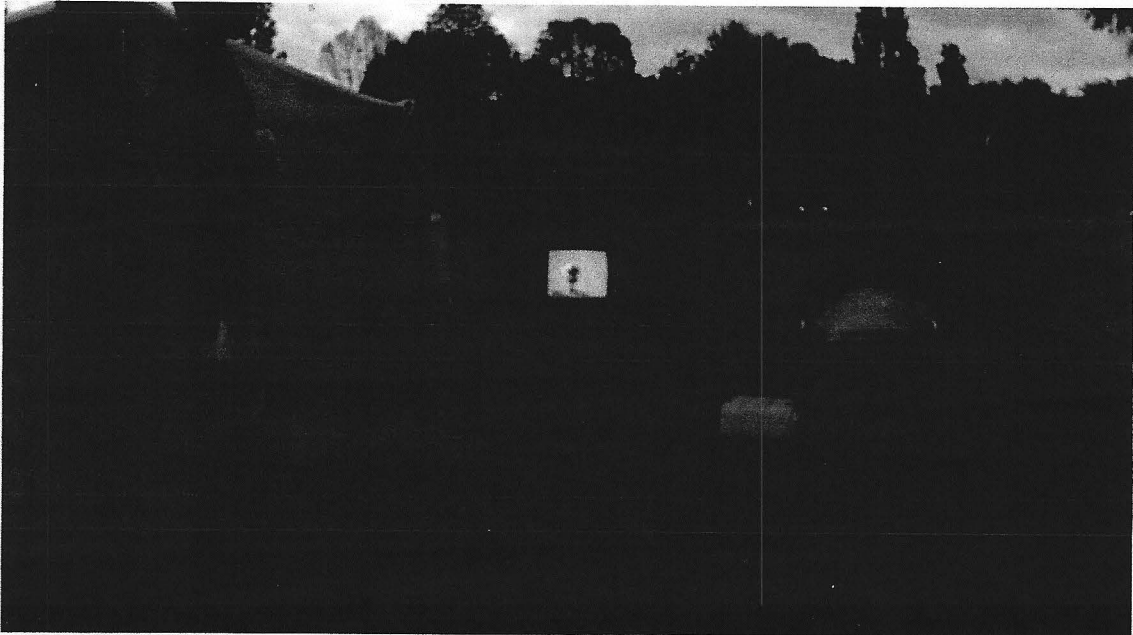
1. Watch the film Havoc on YouTube and consider the two film stills above. What colours, landscape composition, figures or objects, and atmospheric qualities have been used to create a cinematic image?
2. *History painting is a genre in painting defined by subject matter rather than an artistic style, depicting a moment in a narrative story, rather than a static subject such as a portrait. The term derives from the wider senses of the word historia in Latin and Italian, and essentially means "story painting".*

Susan Norrie

Investigate the genre of history painting. What history painting techniques do you think Norrie has been influenced by?

Extension: Sergei Eisenstein's was a Russian filmmaker, watch films *Strike* (1925), *Battleship* (1925), *October* (1928). How does Eisenstein use montage as a tool of political commentary? How is this similar or different to Susan Norrie?





Susan Norrie  
*BLACK WIND* (2005) film stills

Susan Norrie explains that “the video project *BLACK WIND* 2005 is a reminder that we cannot separate ourselves from our environment... that we must accept the moral and ethical consequences of our actions. Taking the image of 'black mist' – the words the Aborigines used to describe the fallout from the atomic tests the British conducted in the 1950s and 60s at Maralinga in the desert of South Australia *BLACK WIND* expands upon the consequences of the Maralinga tests as a metaphor for human catastrophe and irreparable environmental devastation, and the profound psychological damage one associates with the darker forces of human existence. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy Camp continues to defend aboriginal sovereignty and human rights.”

With thanks to the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, Canberra; Isabell Coe, Caroline and Ray Swan, Maisie and Brendan Cokk, Harry Bardwell, “Back to the Blast”, Pitjantjatjara people, National Archives of Australia

3. Watch the exert from the film *Black Wind*(this version is without sound) on YouTube and read the statement on page 6. What is a metaphor? Why do artist use metaphors? What metaphor has Norrie used in *Black Wind*?
4. In her statement on page 6 Norrie outlines three consequences that come from such events as the atomic tests. What are they? How has she communicated the consequences in the film visually, through camera angles and sound?

#### ARTIST TO ARTWORLD

5. Norrie references a range of different art movements and political periods in history that have contributed to her work. One movement that has relevance for today is the Italian art movement Arte Povera from the 1960's. Investigate the movement further by researching it historically and then by finding examples of Arte Povera artwork? From the small paragraph below why do you think Norrie would find this movement significant to her political contemporary practice?

*Arte povera's model of tactical engagement is instructive today, since it protects artistic freedom and eschews partisanship. In short, such works focus on the macrocosm of human experience, not the microcosm of single-issue politics. Such fundamentally engaged works might outlive more narrowly political art.* □

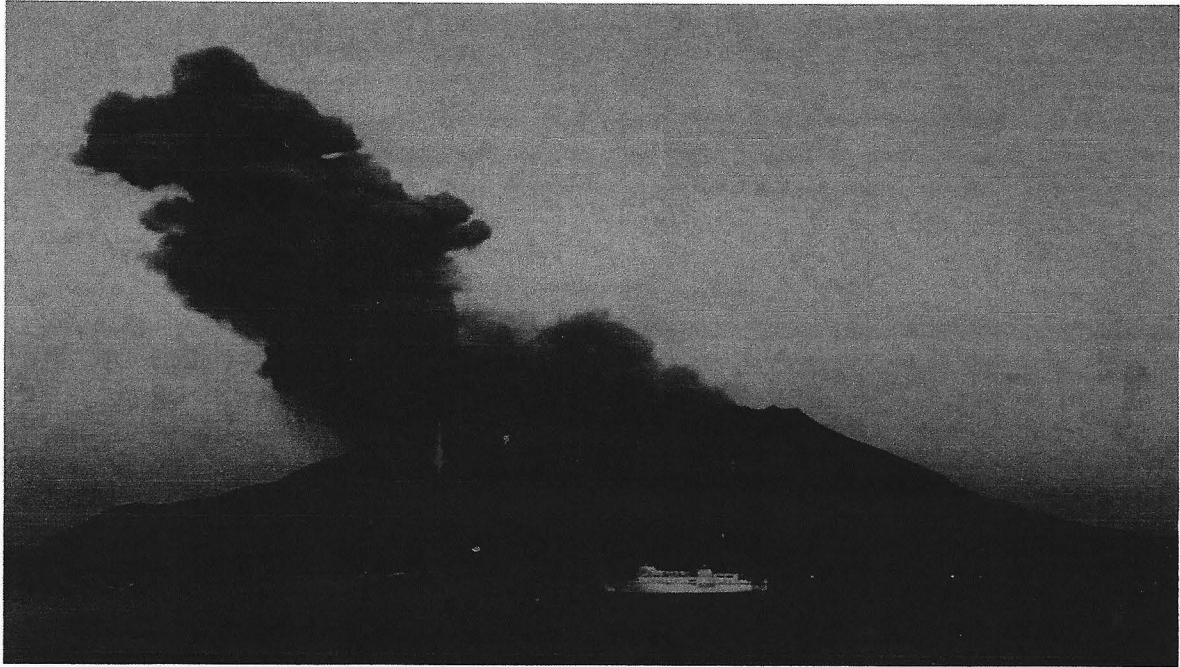
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0268/is\\_3\\_46/ai\\_n30953978/pg\\_3/?tag=content;col1](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_3_46/ai_n30953978/pg_3/?tag=content;col1)

6. Even though Norrie doesn't work in the medium of happenings or sculpture she is able to break down the distance between 'art and life' through the documentary style of film. How does her reportage film achieve a similar intention to the Arte Povera artists?

#### ARTIST TO AUDIENCE

7. How do you use social media as a student? How can Australian artists use social media? Find examples of exhibiting artists who have increased their audiences by having an active online presence. Copy and paste, or write out, comments made by Australian artists from Twitter.
8. Look at the website <http://prayer-circle.typepad.jp/blog/2011/10/messege-from-susan-norrie-in-sydney.html> that posted about Norrie's work *Transit*. How does this context of her work, a blog, change the relationship with the audience?
9. Yokohama Triennale is an international contemporary art exhibition that proceeded last year in the face of economic and environmental devastation. Consider the morale of the people of Japan in 2011 in light of these conditions. What preconceived ideas and emotions would they bring, as an audience, to Susan Norries's work exhibited at the Yokohama Triennial 2011?
10. How do you think your engagement with the film *Transit* is different to the general public of Yokohama, that might have attended the Triennial not as art collectors or critiques but perhaps as a sign of support or as a means of collectively grieving?





Susan Norrie  
*TRANSIT* (2011) still from Video projection, 14:35 min

Consider other artworks you have seen that deal with the way humans relate to their natural environment. Watch Susan Norrie's film *Transit* (2011) on YouTube and read through the artist statement by Susan Norrie on page 2.

1. "I think contemporary art should always treat the reality (of the moment) and this means dealing with political issues that concern the environment and humanity." From this statement, how could you define Norrie's explanation of what contemporary art is?
2. From the artists' statement on page 2, what are three key themes that Susan Norrie is exploring? Themes can be a series of ideas held together by the tension of their similarity or difference. What tensions do these three themes hold in Norrie's films?
3. How are these themes universal; relating to differing times and places? How are these themes specific to the world we live in today?
4. What cinematic techniques does she employ to communicate these as current ideas? How is this similar or different to her previous films?
5. Norrie manipulates film into a hybrid genre of narrative and documentary to create an art form. What elements are scenes are like a story and what elements are more documentary? How does she synthesise the two genres?
6. Why is the *medium* of digital technology the most appropriate for Norrie's *conceptual* exploration?

**ESSAY:** *How does Susan Norrie use ideas and techniques to tell her stories as an art form?* Respond to the above essay question with reference to three of Norrie's films as examples.

"I FEEL A RESPONSIBILITY AS AN ARTIST TO TELL THE STORY FROM THE PEOPLE'S PERSPECTIVE. I HOPE THAT I LISTEN WELL TO ALL MY COLLABORATORS AND COLLEAGUES BUT IN THE END IT'S MY PREOCCUPATION IN THE ART OF STORY TELLING THAT PREVAILS."

SUSAN NORRIE



SUSAN NORRIE  
*BLACK WIND* (2005) film still

Hannah Burns

VADEA NSW CONFERENCE

MAY, 2012

[www.vadea.org.au](http://www.vadea.org.au)

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ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF SUSAN NORRIE





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MAY 2012

# Expressing the Intangible

## Participation and interaction in the art practice of **Agatha Gothe-Snape**



Image courtesy of  
Agatha Gothe-Snape

**Agatha Gothe-Snape is a prominent contemporary Australian artist who has shown in numerous high profile exhibitions of young artists including Primavera 2010 at MCA and NEW010 at ACCA. Gothe-Snape lives and works in Sydney.**



**Agatha Gothe-Snape**  
*Social Sculpture 2011*  
Installation view from Anna Schwartz Gallery,  
Sydney  
vinyl letters, dimensions variable  
Image courtesy of Agatha Gothe-Snape

Online catalogue of recent works

<http://agatha-gothe-snape.posterous.com/>

Gothe-Snape's practice spans across a wide variety of mediums including performance and dance, painting, projections, installations and gouache painting work that borders on graphic illustration. Tying together these diverse art forms is an overarching interest in communication through collaboration and participation, and an analysis of the relationships between the individual and the social. Site, text, colour and conversation are the tools through which

Gothe-Snape orchestrates communication with her audience.

Gothe-Snape often uses simple written instruction to invite others to participate or guide the unfolding performance of her work, this use of instruction is reminiscent of the Fluxus and Situationist movements. Often these text-based instructions involve an ideological or

philosophical element that recalls the manifestos of artists such as Sol Le Witt. Gothe-Snape often relies on simple communication tools — printed T-shirts, PowerPoint presentations, or working onto a wall — to deliver text based declarations that direct people's movement or draw the viewer's attention to an idea or concept (Queensland Art Gallery, 2012).

*'I use the most direct and pared-back and simplest means possible to communicate this sense of the intangibility of emotion.'* (Gothe-Snape, 2010)

## Every Artist Remembered 2009

ACCA blog, a written account by Gothe-Snape of her experience creating *Every Artist Remembered*

<http://accaartblog.com/2011/11/02/agatha-gothe-snape-every-artist-remembered-friday-nights-at-acca/>

*Every Artist Remembered* is a collaborative performance work that took place in the First Draft gallery, Sydney. Gothe-Snape invited various artists to take part in one-on-one 2 hour conversations where they would recall the names of artists, which Gothe-Snape then wrote on a large sheet of paper. The audience of the gallery were invited to bear witness to the relationship between Gothe-Snape and her fellow conversationalist. Instruction, collaboration, interaction and conversation are concepts guiding this work.



**Agatha Gothe-Snape**

*Every Artist Remembered 2009*

Photograph of performance activity from First Draft Gallery, Sydney

Image courtesy of Agatha Gothe-Snape

For this work Gothe-Snape provided instructions to guide the nature of the conversation:

***'I ask that each name be said in relation to the name before. The specific nature of relation is up to you – it could be linguistic, social, historical, lateral, geographic, sexual, intuitive...'*** (Gothe-Snape, ACCA art blog)

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What has traditionally been understood as the 'western canon' of art history? Why has this been important? What has been its function?
- How does Gothe-Snape challenge the idea of a traditional canon of artists in *Every Artist Remembered*?
- Imagine *Every Artist Remembered* took place 100 years ago, how would the artwork differ?
- What is the function of giving instructions for communication? How do you think the artwork would differ without that guidance?
- What is the subjective aspect in the creation of multiple lists of artists through various conversations with different people? How important is the subjective aspect?

### ARTMAKING

- Recreate *Every Artist Remembered* as a class. Use the instructions given by Gothe-Snape and recall as many artists as possible, writing them up on the board. Consider what links exist between artists, consider also what aspects *separate* artists and set them apart. This activity is suited to the beginning of a unit of work on Gothe-Snape to gain an understanding of prior knowledge.



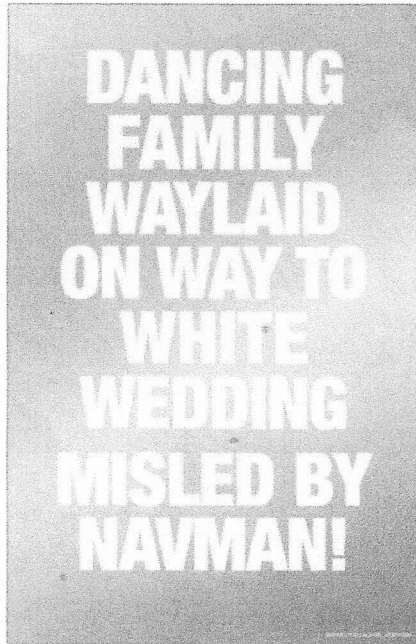
*'I just asked these people what life is like, what they do with their days, what they do with their nights, what their favourite colours are, what they eat for dinner...'*  
(Gothe-Snape, 2011)

ACCA Regional Tour program including interview with Gothe-Snape on *Headliners*

[http://www.accaonline.org.au/Assets/3050/1/ART2\\_Program.pdf](http://www.accaonline.org.au/Assets/3050/1/ART2_Program.pdf)

Interview with Gothe-Snape on the process of creating *Headliners*

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD\\_jLLTmY3g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD_jLLTmY3g)



Agatha Gothe-Snape  
*Headliners* 2011  
Design of full-page newspaper headline  
Image courtesy of Agatha Gothe-Snape

### **Headliners 2011**

*Headliners* is a series of newspaper headlines composed by Gothe-Snape from 8 phone conversations over 8 weeks with willing participants about their lives. The artworks were created specifically for the Australian Centre for Contemporary Arts (ACCA, Melbourne) ART#2 regional art tour, bringing contemporary art to rural locations.

The participants all lived in a rural suburb, and each headline was printed in that suburb's local newspaper. Gothe-Snape worked for a newspaper at the time this work was created, journalism and editing are entrenched in the process of this work, which involved Gothe-Snape reducing information to short, abstract and often nonsensical phrases that sum-up a human life. Seen in a newspaper, the works would appear ambiguous and readers may not realise they are participating as an audience to an artwork.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- What is the 'site' of this artwork?
- What are the different kinds of boundaries that are dissolved in the creation of this work?
- **Further investigation:** Gothe-Snape's practice of reducing, editing and playing with random words and phrases could be connected to Surrealist poetry and exquisite-corpse.

### **ARTMAKING**

- Break into pairs and ask each other the questions Gothe-Snape asked the participants of *Headliners*. From the information you've gathered edit a headline about that person's life, keep it to 8 words or less. Design posters for your headline using wordle. Consider what symbolic significance the colour of your headline has. This activity is adaptable for K - 12.
- Students could experiment with photography as a medium to visually document their answers to Gothe-Snape's questions.

Wordle is a free online text visualisation program: <http://www.wordle.net/>

VISUAL ARTS AND DESIGN EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION



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### Acknowledgements

Text in this resource has been taken and/or adapted from the following sources:

- The official online catalogue of Agatha Gothe-Snapes recent work:  
<http://agatha-gothe-snape.posterous.com/>
- Queensland Art Gallery artist biography:  
[http://mobile.qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/coming\\_soon/contemporary\\_australia\\_women/artists/agatha\\_gothe-snape](http://mobile.qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/coming_soon/contemporary_australia_women/artists/agatha_gothe-snape)
- Interviews with the artist including:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPGG23bcMJE>  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD\\_jLLTmY3g](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xD_jLLTmY3g)

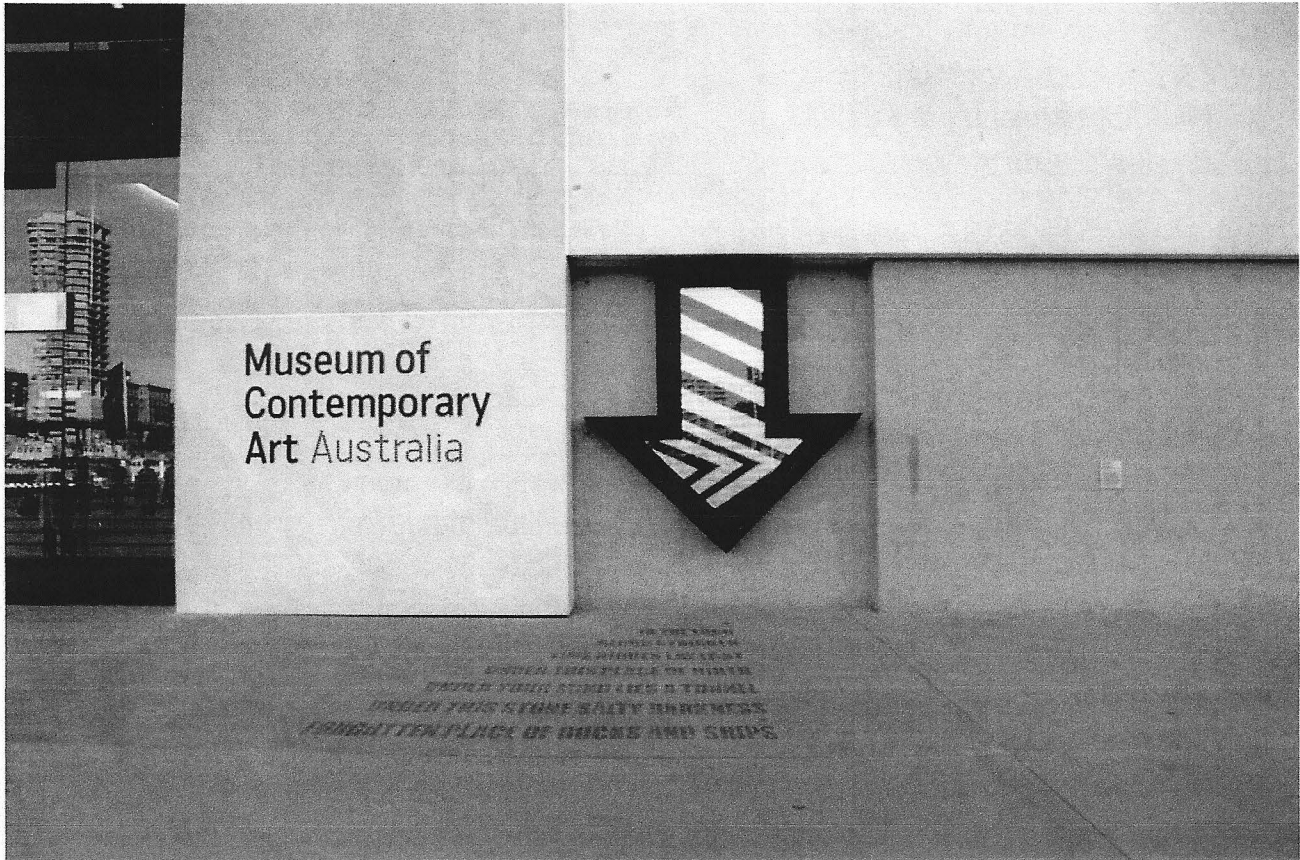
**All images taken with permission from Agatha Gothe-Snapes online catalogue.**

**Resource developed by Emma Barry.**



# Provocative Dialogues The Practice of Brook Andrew

As part of the redevelopment of the Museum of Contemporary Art, the museum has commissioned a new site-specific work by Brook Andrew, *Warrang*. The work's placement at the main quayside entrance with its arrow marker, Wiradjuri patterning and evocative text provided the catalyst and the context for the investigations in this resource.



**Brook Andrew: *Warrang*, 2012**

Animated LED arrow, Australian hardwood with shou-sugi-ban finish, sandblasted concrete

Site specific installation, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney

Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries Melbourne

Brook Andrew's artistic practice is diverse, complex and elusive, deliberately defying easy definition or categorisation. This education resource looks at aspects of his practice and focuses particularly on the ways that his work challenges our assumptions about history and culture.

While the material is pitched for Stage 6 students, teachers would be able to adapt this content for Stage 4 and 5.

**IN THE LOCH  
BLOOD STRICKEN  
TIME HIDDEN LAY LOST  
UNDER THIS PLACE OF BIRTH  
UNDER YOUR MIND LIES A TUNNEL  
UNDER THIS STONE SALTY DARKNESS  
FORGOTTEN PLACE OF DOCKS AND SHIPS**

Text from *Warrang*

## About the artist

Brook Andrew is an interdisciplinary artist who works in a range of forms including prints, site-specific works, installations, video and performance. For over two decades, Andrew has engaged in dialogues, nationally and internationally, about ideas about cultural histories, memories and identities, particularly those related to colonialism and post colonialism. He is interested in challenging limited or stereotypical points of view about indigenous peoples, both in the past and in the present.

*At his core, Andrew is always arguing, always fighting.*

*His enemies are simplistic distortions and indifference.*

Anne Loxley: *The Battle Continues*, (2007)

Brook Andrew's mother's family originates from Wiradjuri people from Erambie Mission, Cowra, this cultural identity informs his questions about the representation of indigenous Australians in both NSW, public media and historical documents. However, Andrew has resisted being reduced to the label of 'indigenous artist' to not only honor his Scottish/Irish ancestry, but as it potentially restricts artists to issues just about their cultural background, limiting their ability to engage with wider national and international critique of cultural issues.

*I personally view myself as an artist who works within a world holding multiple views, one strong value is a Wiradjuri identity.*

Brook Andrew, interviewed by Peter Minter, 2006

Through his work investigating the ways indigenous Australians are represented in the past and in the present, Brook Andrew seeks to create broader international connections with diverse stories and other histories from other cultures. Works incorporating Wiradjuri patterns or archival images of indigenous Australians have been developed and exhibited in international museums and events, provoking dialogue with other places with a colonial past. He also cites connections to international artists investigating similar questions about history such as Christian Boltanski, William Kentridge, Doris Salcedo, and Kara Walker.

## Classroom Investigation

Brook Andrew in an interview with Peter Minter in 2006 questions the limitations of labels and categorisation of Aboriginal Art and the ways that it pigeonholes and conditions artists.

*Aboriginal artists have been and continue to be labeled 'authentic', 'traditional', 'urban', 'remote', 'dotty painters' and 'angry urban artists'. The way in which the Aboriginal art movement is classified, in my opinion, follows the historical classifications I have mentioned, from a 19th Century anthropology to that of the negative media press.*

Brook Andrew, interviewed by Peter Minter, 2006, page 2

- Read the full interview listed under the Text tab on <http://www.brookandrew.com/art.html>
- Outline the issues and limitations identified by Brook Andrew that are the result of these labels.
- Brook Andrew states 'my art is not an aesthetic or theme imprisoned within 'Aboriginal Art' (Brook Andrew, interviewed by Peter Minter, 2006, page 5)  
What are some of the key interests Brook Andrew identifies as central to his practice?



*History is not just inherited,  
it changes all the time,  
except some people think it  
doesn't, or others try to  
forget it"*

Brook Andrew, 2010



**Brook Andrew: *Sexy & Dangerous*, 1996**

Digital Image printed on Duraclear mounted on Acrylic  
183x182cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

## Reframing History

Brook Andrew sees history as dynamic and being constantly reframed. In his work, Brook Andrew often uses archival images from ethnographic museums and libraries. In recent times, these museums and their collections have been viewed as the product of a Eurocentric and patronising view of indigenous cultures. Andrew, in a number of works, has selected images of indigenous Australians from these collections and re-presented these to expose these 'colonial mindsets of the past and all too present' (Gardner, 2008)

In one of his early work *Sexy and Dangerous* (1996), Andrew digitally alters an archival photo of a Barwon River man by Charles Kerry in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

*"The argument in investigating these colonial photographs is that no one really knows how these people felt or were treated. In this case I was drawn to this image because he didn't look like a typical Aboriginal man and his gaze somehow penetrates you".*

(Brook Andrew in Crombie, 2007).

Mandarin and English texts proclaiming him 'sexy and dangerous' were superimposed on the image that was mounted on acrylic, reminiscent of glossy advertising images. This juxtaposition of cultures and the medium of advertising with the archival image poses questions about our preconceptions and misconceptions about the identity of the person in the image. Originally these archival images were not portraits of individuals but were seen as ethnographic records of a race.

## Classroom Investigation

- Investigate and explain the ways that Brook Andrew has re-framed archival images of indigenous people in works such as *Sexy and Dangerous*, 1996, *I Split your Gaze*, 1997, *Gun Metal Grey*, 2007, *The Island*, 2008
- How has he used these images to challenge accepted histories in Australia?

### Connections with collections in the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

- Students could investigate other works that reference archival images to raise questions about our history or our perceptions of race and identity. Artists and works could include:

**Vernon Ah Kee:** *Fantasies of the Good Series*, 2004

**Richard Bell:** *Worth Explaining?* 2002

**Gordon Bennett:** *Untitled (dismay, displace, disperse, dispirit, display, dismiss)*, 1989

**Daniel Boyd:** *We call them Pirates out here*, 2006

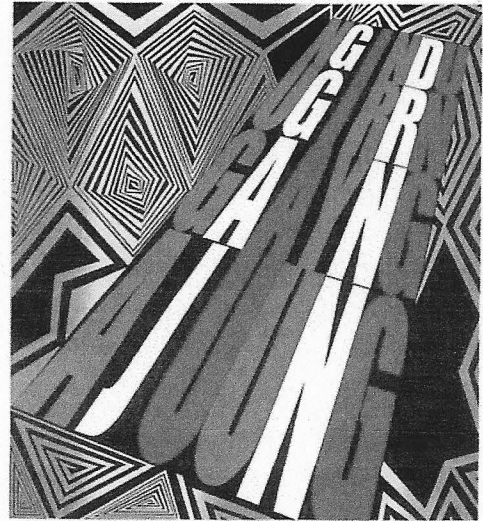
**Fiona Foley:** *Badtjala Woman series*, 1994

## Juxtapositions: The mediums create the message

*The artist takes the semiotic language of the everyday, of advertising, of global branding and reworks and subverts it ... he confronts us with the familiar in an unfamiliar context*  
 Delahunt, 2001

Brook Andrew employs a wide range of mediums and forms in his artmaking practice. He uses video, interviews, performance work and events, site-specific installations, printmaking and photography. He often juxtaposes the tools of advertising such as text or neon imagery and signage alongside Wiradjuri patterns taken from tree markings. These patterns may have been projected on significant sites such as St Mary's Cathedral, screen printed onto panels or clothing for performers or painted iconic forms such as the family caravan in works such as *Travelling Colony*, 2012.

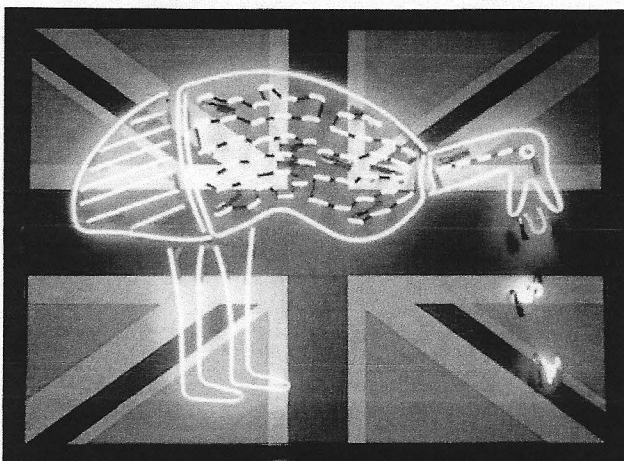
Forms that reference carnivals and theme parks have been used in works such as the Sydney Biennale work, *Jumping Castle War Memorial*, 2010 or *Theme Park*, 2008 exhibited at the Aboriginal Art Museum in Utrecht, Holland. He has also used international references to movements such as Russian Constructivism through his use of text in works such as *You See Me* from the *Hope and Peace series*, 2005



**Brook Andrew: *You See Me*, 2005**  
 Screen Print. 100x98cm, Printed by Larry Rawlings. Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

### Classroom investigation

- Examine the ways that Brook Andrew has used tactics and strategies such as juxtaposition, appropriation, intertextuality, parody and irony in his works. Look at some of the examples listed.
- How does his use of these tactics and strategies challenge accepted views?
- Investigate the different ways that audiences engage with works through the use of these tactics and strategies in his work? How do they become involved or complicit in the meaning of the work?



**Brook Andrew: *Emu*, 2004**  
 Animated neon and anodised aluminium, 120x165x18cm  
 Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

*It's a sell sell advertising thing that can be tongue in cheek. I love advertising. I wanted to make large text pieces that were desirable. Neon is so beautiful, so intensely colourful. Somehow the medium changes the message. The typical art medium, for example painting, confines the political message. With neon, the idea is hidden but not confined. People can stomach the message in neon.*

Brook Andrew in Anne Loxley: *The Battle Continues*, (2007)



**Brook Andrew: *Donut*, 2011/2012**

PVC vinyl  
 Sydney Laneways Project  
 Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno  
 Galleries Melbourne

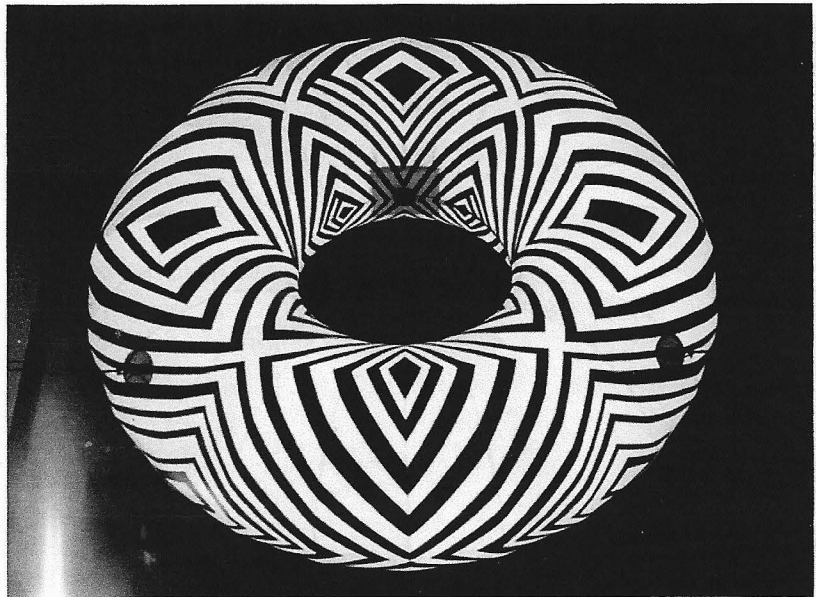
## Reframing Sites

### Site Specific Works

*I was interested in reflecting on the romance of the site and what it was, and in addressing the dream-like qualities of history and how we perceive histories in different ways.*

Brook Andrew speaking about the site of Warrang at the MCA

Many of Brook Andrew's installation works and performance works make strong reference to the site. He is interested in the ways that artworks interact with the histories and memories associated with a site prompting the audience to take notice and re-consider their own views.



### Sydney Laneways Project: *Donut*

*A large inflated PVC form takes the shape of a donut floating high above our heads. As we walk underneath the silhouette is a familiar every-day shape. But scale and context suggests this is nothing like a regular donut, transformed instead into a striking black and white matrix of Wiradjuri design. The shape references ancient European and Indigenous depictions of time travel and healing, and the popular contemporary notion of a 'pie in the sky'.*

Curated by Amanda Sharrad and Justine Topfer.  
<http://brookandrew.wordpress.com/> posted April 6, 2012

## Classroom Investigations

- Read the curatorial notes about *Warrang* by Anne Loxley and Brook Andrew  
<http://www.mca.com.au/artists-and-works/building-commissions/brook-andrew-warrang-2012/>  
 Follow the links to the installation process as well as to the archaeological information about the site.
- Investigate the relationships of Brook Andrew's work to specific sites. You could consider works such as *Warrang*, 2012, *Donut*, 2011/12, *8 Months of War*, 2008. How does Andrew raise questions about the histories and memories associated with the site of the work?
- Look at other works by contemporary artists that are interested in representing ideas about the history of a site. Works in Sydney that could be investigated include:
  - Fiona Foley & Janet Laurence:** *Edge of Trees*, Museum of Sydney,
  - Lynne Roberts Goodwin:** *Tank Stream – Into the head of the cove?*, Pitt Street Mall North, Martin Place, Hunter Street, Bridge Street, Alfred Street
  - Fiona Hall:** *Folly for Mrs Macquarie*, Botanic Gardens, Sydney
  - Nigel Heyer:** *Wireless House*, Foley Park, Glebe, 2004
  - Janet Laurence and Jisuk Han:** *Veil of Trees*, Domain Sydney,
  - Kimio Tsuchiya:** *Memory is Creation without End*, Tarpeian Way South,
  - Hossein Valamanesh:** *Memorial to the Great Irish Famine* (1999), collaboration with Angela Valamanesh: sound element by Paul Carter, Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney Hyde Park Barracks
- A useful link is the City of Sydney website <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cityart/index.aspx> which links you to site specific works across Sydney.



## Creating Sites

In some works, Brook Andrew does more than ask the audience to re-think the ways we have viewed and understood a particular site. *The Colony*, (2007) is a site specific work with one caravan and performers that was exhibited in Europe 5 years ago. This work juxtaposed the images of the circus, side shows, the carnival caravan and the performers against the context of European museums and galleries to highlight issues around displays of indigenous people, their remains and artefacts.

For the 2012 Sydney Festival, Andrew created a new work, *Travelling Colony*, with 7 caravans with 14 performers that were taken to different sites across Sydney. In this work, he creates the site for dialogue and invites the audience to participate through street performance and opportunities to view videos in the caravans. The videos featured 7 Redfern locals who spoke of their personal experiences of living and working in Redfern.

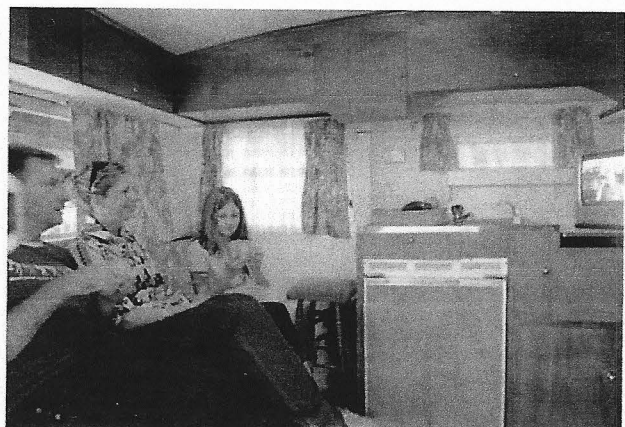
For each caravan, Andrew created a design based on Wiradjuri patterns from shield and tree markings. Andrew describes these patterns as “markers of identity, power and ceremony ... our country’s coat of arms” (Brook Andrew in clip from Sydney Festival TV). The work *Travelling Colony* creates a new cultural site that Andrew describes as a “celebration”.

### Classroom Investigation

Examine Brook Andrew’s ideas and working practices for *Travelling Colony* on <http://www.studiotv.com.au/arts-news/sydney-festival-tv-brook-andrews-travelling-colony/>

## Brook Andrew: *Travelling Colony*, 2012

7 painted caravans and video work 'Interviews II', Carriageworks, Sydney  
 Sydney Festival and Carriageworks commission for Sydney Festival. Photography: Brook Andrew. Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno, Galleries Melbourne.





## Useful Links

### Brook Andrew's website

<http://www.brookandrew.com/art.html>

Includes gallery of works and links to a artist's statements and a range of very good articles about his practice.

### Wordpress blog

<http://brookandrew.wordpress.com/>

Updated collection of articles on recent works. Sources are generally from the print media and are a good readable summary about works.

## MCA Resources

### Warrang, 2012

<http://www.mca.com.au/artists-and-works/building-commissions/brook-andrew-warrang-2012/>

Curatorial statement on work by Anne Loxley and Brook Andrew

### Brook Andrew interviewed on Artist's Voice Series 2, 2006

<http://www.mca.com.au/mca-learning/learning-resources/>

Brook Andrew discusses his works *White Word 1 (Part B - Black)* and *White Word 1 (Part A - White)* featured in the exhibition *Bangu Yilbara: Works from the MCA Collection 2006*. Series also includes a number of other artists mentioned in this resource such as Vernon Ah Kee, Fiona Foley.

## Penrith Regional Gallery and The Lewers Bequest

<http://www.penrithregionalgallery.org/aboutus-acquisitions-brookandrew.php>

Commentary on Brook Andrew work in their collection, *I split your Gaze, 1997*

Penrith Regional Gallery is also the site of the former home of Gerald and Margot Lewers and was a significant site in the development of Modernism in Australia and there are resources available about the role that this site played in that development

### ABC Message Stick program on Brook Andrew

<http://www.abc.net.au/tv/messagestick/stories/s1242475.htm>

Includes transcript of interview with Brook Andrew and including family members, Djon Mundine, Julie Nimmo and Marcia Langton

### Travelling Colony Youtube

<http://www.studiotv.com.au/arts-news/sydney-festival-tv-brook-andrews-travelling-colony/>

Good clip showing the making of the work and Brook Andrew discussing the ideas in the work

### Jumping Castle War Memorial: 17<sup>th</sup> Biennale of Sydney, 2010

[http://www.bos17.com/page/brook\\_andrew.html](http://www.bos17.com/page/brook_andrew.html)

Youtube clip of artist talk at Cockatoo Island

## UnDisclosed: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Indigenous Art Triennial

<http://nga.gov.au/unDisclosed/>

Information on the National Gallery website of UnDisclosed: 2<sup>nd</sup> National Indigenous Art Triennial

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/indigenous-art-is-not-ancient-history-20120508-1yat1.html>

Sydney Morning Herald review of the 2012 2<sup>nd</sup> National Indigenous Art Triennial. Article focuses on artists with interests in reframing history

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**Crombie, Isobel** (2007), *Brook Andrew in Undescriptiond: Portraits of Australian Artists*. McMillan Art Publishing, 2007

**Delahunt, Meaghan** (2001), *signs, symbols and potents*. Catalogue essay for *unseen series*. Sanskriti Kendra, New Dehli. Asialink Residency

**Gardner, Anthony** (2008), *The Skin of Now: Contemporary Art, Contiguous Histories*.

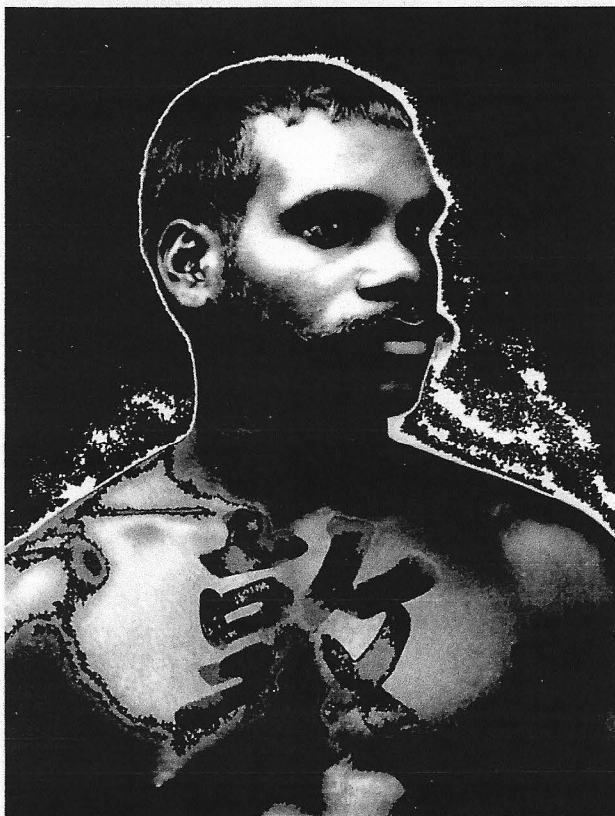
**Loxley, Anne**, (2007) *The Battle Continues in Eye to Eye: Brook Andrew*. International Touring Survey Exhibition. Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne

**Loxley, Anne and Andrew, Brook** (2012), *Brook Andrew Warrang*, <http://www.mca.com.au/artists-and-works/building-commissions/brook-andrew-warrang-2012/>

**Minter, Peter** (2006), *Brook Andrew, interviewed by Peter Minter*, February 16, 2006 in Meajin Blak Times. Indigenous Australian Vol 15, No 1, 2006

**Thomas, Nicholas** (2008), *Blow Up: Brook Andrew and the Anthropological Archive*. Solo Exhibition at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge

All articles above except the Anne Loxley and Brook Andrew statement about *Warrang* were retrieved from <http://www.brookandrew.com/art.html>



**Brook Andrew: *Sexy & Dangerous II*, 1996**

Digital Image printed on Duraclear mounted on Acrylic  
108 x145cm

Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

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[www.tolarnogalleries.com](http://www.tolarnogalleries.com)

### **Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia, Sydney**

[www.mca.com.au](http://www.mca.com.au)

### **Penrith Regional Gallery and Lewers Bequest**

[www.penrithregionalgallery.org](http://www.penrithregionalgallery.org)

### **Trent Walter**

Resource developed by Karen King

### ***Irresistible,***

### **VADEA NSW Conference,**

### **May 2012**

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