

La Biennale di Venezia

53. Esposizione  
Internazionale  
d'Arte

Partecipazioni nazionali

**Australia**  
53rd International  
Art Exhibition  
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA

**Shaun Gladwell**  
Australian Pavilion

Once Removed  
**Vernon Ah Kee**  
**Ken Yonetani**  
**Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro**  
The Ludoteca, Castello

**Education Resource**

COFA



UNSW  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES



Australian Government



**Title**

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**A Strategic Partnership**

This publication is the result of a strategic partnership between the Australia Council and the College of Fine Arts (University of New South Wales). Led by Carli Collins (Project Coordinator International Market Development, Australia Council), Dr David Sudmalis (Manager - Strategic Development and Evaluation, Community Partnerships, Australia Council), Kim Snepvangers (Head of School, School of Art History & Art Education, COFA, UNSW) and Gay McDonald (Senior Lecturer, School of Art History & Art Education, COFA, UNSW), the partnership seeks to build capacity in education in the arts and education through the arts. Working with senior students is an integral part of this process in bridging the divide between students, government, artists, organisations and education institutions.



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# Welcome

It is my pleasure to write the introduction to the Venice Biennale Education Resource for 2009. This educative and attractively presented education resource has been the result of many people's hard work and dedication to the arts in Australia. I would like to particularly thank Ms Carli Collins, the Project Coordinator of International Market Development, and Dr David Sudmalis, the Manager of Strategic Development and Evaluation, Community Partnerships from the Australia Council. Their high level of commitment, enthusiasm and energy to this project has been formidable.

The College of Fine Arts (COFA) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) was also an important contributing factor to the success of the Venice Biennale Education Resource. Ms Kim Snepvangers (Head of School, School of Art History & Art Education) and Dr Gay McDonald (Senior Lecturer, School of Art History & Art Education) provided valuable mentoring to the following COFA students: Ms Jane Cleary, Ms Jessica Haly, Ms Sally Leaney, Ms Lisa Rumble, Ms Tali Seidman and Ms Elizabeth Thorpe. This guidance enabled the students to compile the information they had gathered through interviews with the artists and further research in order to construct well written and informative narrative accounts of each of the artists. This information was then utilised by Dr Ross Kitson and Dr Peter Whiteman from the Institute of Early Childhood at Macquarie University, Ms Melissa Smith from Scotch Oakburn College in Tasmania and Dr Margaret Baguley from the Education Faculty at the University of Southern Queensland to inform and create interesting and appealing K-6 primary activities. Mr Lance Hooper from Baulkham Hills High School contributed to the well considered and engaging secondary art activities.

The Advisory Panel consisting of Dr Margaret Baguley (USQ), Ms Tess Allas (UNSW), Ms Marina Grasso (James Busby High School), Mr Lance Hooper (Baulkham Hills High School), Ms Kate Ravenswood (Gallery of Modern Art, Queensland) and Ms Melissa Smith (Scotch Oakburn College) considered various sections of the education resource and its relevance to primary and secondary students and teachers in Australian schools.

The exemplary work of the artists selected to represent Australia at the Venice Biennale is without question. We are privileged to hear Shaun Gladwell, Vernon Ah Kee, Ken Yonetani, Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro discuss their work with the students from COFA. These interviews provide important insights into the themes driving their work and their philosophy. I congratulate them on their selection and their willingness to provide this personal input into the Venice Biennale Education Resource.

The Venice Biennale Education Resource contains a wealth of information for students and teachers in order to engage with the work of these artists. The role of educators is to prepare students to negotiate the world they live in. The importance of visual education in teaching students to be able to comprehend visual language is paramount in creating critical, creative and lateral thinkers. I cannot commend this education resource to you highly enough and hope that you enjoy using it as much as I have by reading it and learning about the work of these talented, sensitive and dynamic artists.

Congratulations to all of those involved in bringing the Venice Biennale Education Resource together and many thanks for their generosity of spirit.

**Dr Margaret Baguley**  
Chair, Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource Advisory Panel  
Senior Lecturer in Arts Education  
University of Southern Queensland



Vernon Ah Kee, *Cant Chant (Wegewhere)*, 2007. (video still)

# Introduction

The Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource is written by an Education Team formed through a collaboration between the Australia Council and the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales.

The contribution of COFA Art and Design education students in the research and writing of the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource highlights the crucial role of training institutions in the development of next generation artists, teachers, designers and theorists. The six COFA students selected to work on the project are at different stages of completing their degrees, who have elected to complete additional subject areas such as *The Art Museum and Education* and were well-positioned to work alongside a range of art world professionals in the research and writing of the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource.

The Australia Council brief for the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource required that the content be accessible across Australian states, age groups and curriculum requirements, encompassing primary and secondary audiences. As a national project, the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource provides a range of entry points into the practice of contemporary Australian artists represented at the Venice Biennale.

This printable component of the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource is comprised of:

- an introduction
- a historical overview of the Venice Biennale that briefly details Australia's engagement over time in this prestigious cultural event
- Australia's contribution in 2009
- profiles of each artist represented in Venice in 2009. These profiles highlight the key themes of the curatorial premise such as displacement, identity and environment
- 'Further Ideas': suggestions for taking the content of the profiles into the classroom

The Education Team has been working on this project for over five months and are excited to unveil the resource, intended for use across the nation. The Education Team hopes this resource gives an insight into Australia's participation at this international contemporary art event.

One of the critical exchanges in compiling the Education Resource has been the transfer of knowledge and experience from all participants to others. Learning through partnership (from teacher-to-student; student-to-teacher; student-to-student; education institution-to-government; government-to-education institution; government-to-student inter alia) has been crucial in the determining of the content and structure of the resource and its many facets. The voices of the authors have not been sublimated to an overall document tone – instead, each individual brings to the table their sum of experience and their absorption of new knowledge – and, importantly, their own words. It has been an exciting process and one that we hope can continue and evolve in future education resources. Your feedback is vital in this, and we encourage you to do so on the form on page 49.

This resource is one of many ways that educators and students alike can engage with the Venice Biennale 2009. Other components of the resource include:

- four artist interviews in which the artist talks about their work for the Venice Biennale, plus an interview with the curator of the 'Once Removed' group show (transcripts are also available)
- a National Schools Project for all Australian schools that encourages artmaking and exhibition development through ABC's Pool website
- a Facebook page for discussing the Australian contribution to the Venice Biennale 2009, and sharing ideas about applying the Education Resource
- a Visual Resource for the classroom made possible by a collaboration between the Australia Council and COFA, UNSW will be distributed nationally to 12,000 schools., featuring a suite of five images and key quotes about the artists work and the Venice Biennale.

The interviews in particular are important resources for hearing about the work in the artist's own language and terms. These revelatory documents reveal an insight into the thoughts of Shaun Gladwell, Ken Yonetani, Vernon Ah Kee, Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro and Felicity Fenner, and document the process of engagement of the students directly with the artists and curator themselves.

We hope you find the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource a useful professional tool, and we look forward to teaching and learning with you into the future.

Enjoy!

**Australia Venice Biennale Education Team.**

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

# Engaging Children in Artworks: Ideas for Generalist Primary Educators

**Dr Margaret Baguley**

Chair, Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource Advisory Panel  
Senior Lecturer in Arts Education, University of Southern Queensland

## Research about the Importance of Art in Education

The value of the arts in engaging children in learning has been recognised by numerous educational experts who have advocated for the value of arts-based pedagogies, multiple ways of knowing and multiple intelligences (Bamford, 2006; Eisner, 2002; Gardner, 1993; Wright, 2003). The recent National Review of Visual Education in Australia described how the current global shift of communication to the visual requires educators to prepare students with the skills to 'create, process, critique and appreciate the spectrum of visual phenomena in the individual's external and internal environment' (Davis, 2008, p. 11). The importance of engaging children in the arts, and specifically visual art, is the focus of this section of the Venice Biennale Art Education Resource.

Many teachers use picture books in their class to stimulate children's interest through viewing images while they simultaneously listen to the text. Artworks also contain stories which can engage children. It is important for the teacher to inform themselves about the artist's background and works in order to be able to facilitate a discussion with the children. It is also essential to look at a diverse range of works from different times and cultures which illustrate how artists have viewed the same theme or topic in a multitude of different ways. Exposure to art from different cultures also helps to develop acceptance of difference in the classroom and promotes tolerance and diversity.

## The Language of Art: Design Elements and Principles

Introducing children to the language of art, the design elements and principles of art is very important and should occur as early as possible. These are commonly agreed on to be: Line, Shape, Tone, Texture, Colour, Contrast, Harmony, Focal Point, Space, Perspective, Balance and Movement. The website Art Lex <<http://www.artlex.com/>> is an art dictionary which contains definitions of art terminology, such as the design elements and principles, as well as information on art movements throughout

history. It also contains illustrations of various artists' works and various techniques and media that are used in the creation of artworks. The following section provides information about what art concepts children can understand and suggestions for when to introduce them from the Kindergarten to the Grade 8 level. Knowing what concepts children can understand can assist in knowing the types of guided questions to construct when discussing artists' works. These are a general guideline as some children will be at various stages of physical and mental development. The following are adapted from Helen Hume's (2000, pp. 30 - 47), A Survival Kit for the Elementary/Middle School Art Teacher.

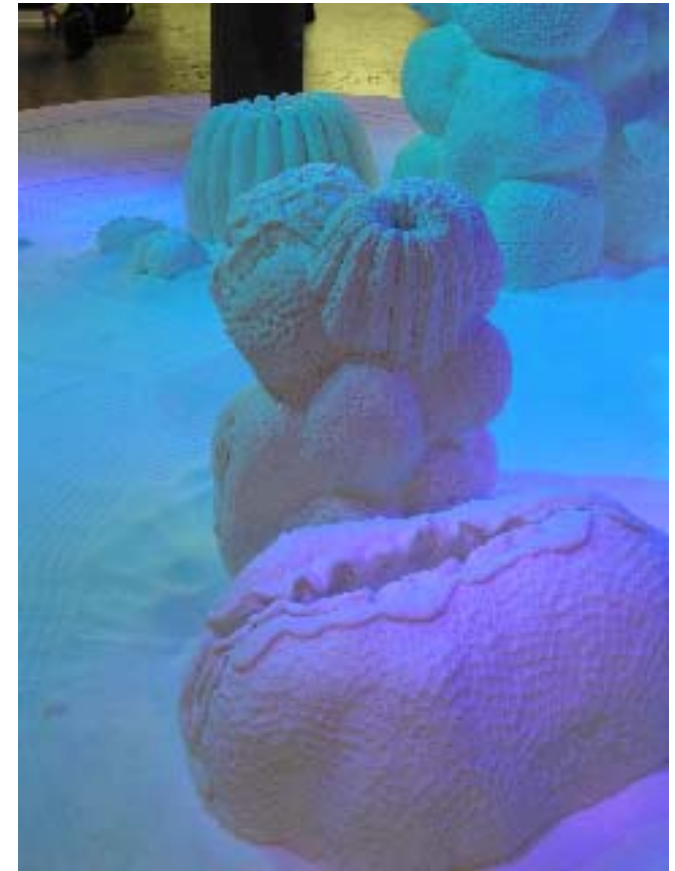
## A Guide to What Children Should Know in Art: K- 6

### Concepts that Kindergarten Children Understand:

Identify and draw differences in line: thick, thin, zigzag, curved, straight, interrupted; Recognise and draw geometric and free-form shapes; Identify and use light and dark colours; Identify red, yellow, blue, green, violet, and orange, but not whether they are primary or secondary; Make large shapes by combining geometric and free-form shapes; Create pattern by repetition of design; Perceive things that are alike and different; Learn about and use tools in a safe, responsible manner; Recognise differences in art media after introduction and use of various media; and Talk about their work and that of other artists.

### Suggestions for Teaching Kindergarten Children:

It is important to allow kindergarten time to experiment with a range of materials. Encourage them to draw about personal experiences and themselves. It is important to provide guidance to kindergarten children by teaching some techniques and using media through step-by-step instructions. This does not mean that every child's work should look the same as individual expression is very important in art. Kindergarten children often do not feel the need to make colours relate to reality and have little sense of scale – they are the centre of the universe in their art making. At this age they are characteristically quite self-centered so involving each student to make an individual portion of an all-class project develops their social skills.



*Sweet Barrier Reef (installation detail), 2008*

**Concepts that First Grade Children Understand:**

Recognise and describe the use of line in historical artworks; Appreciate rhythm in a work of art such as Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*; Understand that form and function go together, e.g. a clay pot must be strong and well built to carry water inside it; Know that artists have designed clothing, buildings, and furniture; See the difference between two-dimensional and three-dimensional work; Discuss subject matter in art; understand differences in still-life, portrait, landscape, seasons; Understand careers, e.g. teacher, police officer, hairdresser, doctor, minister and fire fighter.

**Suggestions for Teaching First Grade Children:**

It is important to teach first grade students one step at a time as they have difficulty understanding more than one idea at a time. At this age they are more aware of people around them and enjoy working in groups. They can therefore be encouraged to talk about their own work and that of others. It is important in first grade to introduce the vocabulary of line, rhythm, shape and space. Ask them to identify line and shape in various environments such as the classroom or on their clothing. On free dress days or for 'show and tell' they can be encouraged to bring something from home or wear something decorated with line or shape. First grade children are able to thread a large-eye needle, tie a knot and do some simple stitchery based on line and shape. At this age they love lessons that are full of activity and fun, can work enthusiastically and be absorbed in creating art and draw what they know, not what they see.

**Concepts that Second Grade Children Understand:**

Become more aware of size relationships in comparing objects and in regard to themselves; Become more aware that things are designed by artists (cars, clothes, kitchen items, furniture buildings); Become aware of themes in artworks from various cultures; are able to add texture that resembles real texture; for example, hair; Understand that personal selections, such as clothing, reflect personal expression; Understand that line can be used to make something appear three-dimensional; Understand positive and negative shapes (may be best done with cut-paper); Describe how atmosphere can be shown by colour differences; Observe design

(pattern, balance) in natural organisms such as butterflies, insects and in art; Recognise differences in art media.

**Suggestions for Teaching Second Grade Children:**

It is important for second grade children to be introduced to unfamiliar art forms and materials such as those being used by contemporary artists in the Venice Biennale. They can be introduced to value differences, mixing tints and shades of colour and using transparent and opaque colours (Look at the suggested K-6 art activities for Ken Yonetani's work). In second grade children are able to combine found materials in sculpture (such as in the work of Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro). Discuss with the children the importance of not using symbols in their work, such as drawing a sun with rays, stick figures, pointy mountains and "balloon" trees. At this age second grade children are extremely confident and willing to tackle anything in their artwork. They are open to new experiences, welcome responsibility and love nature, imaginary creatures and fantasy.

**Concepts that Third Grade Children Understand:**

Use overlapping shapes, variation in lines, textures, colours and sizes; Comprehend foreground, middle ground and background, and show these in various ways; Discriminate between warm and cool colours and can identify how artists have used colour for expression; Define symmetrical, asymmetrical, and radial balance; Identify columns, beams, domes and arches, and analyse how a building is constructed; Develop personal use of colour and other elements effectively in two-dimensional work; Become aware of articulation of parts of the human figure.

**Suggestions for Teaching Third Grade Children:**

Encourage children in the third grade to create a non-objective work of art through the introduction of historical artworks. It is also important to teach them how to see such as through contour drawing of a hand and the human figure. Discuss the proportions of the human form and ask them to draw their classmates as models (see the suggested K-6 activities for Shaun Gladwell). Children of this age are very interested in learning to draw realistically so

guidance is very important. It is essential to be clear about your objectives at the beginning of the lesson and then to evaluate with the student halfway through the lesson to see how they are meeting the objectives of their work. Talk about how things work, such as buildings and machinery, with specific focus on form and function. Take the children outside to draw flowers, trees, animals and plants so they can see there are many different ways to draw, for example a mountain. Third grade children also enjoy art gallery visits and learning about the role of artists in society. They are enthusiastic, open to new experiences and using new materials.

**Concepts that Fourth Grade Children Understand:**

Comprehend colour scheme based on colour wheel: warm/cool, contrasting mood, "grayed" colours; Develop a more realistically proportioned human figure with movement; Become aware of how artist depict animals and the human figure by looking at various artworks; Can identify different media, subject matter, and art forms such as sculpture, tempera, watercolour, prints, portraits, landscapes; comprehend that form follows function in design, and can point out or bring in specific examples; Understand that many artists express themselves and their cultural identities through their artwork; Recognise architecture from various climates and cultures of the world based on the construction materials used, including their own regional architecture.

**Suggestions for Teaching Fourth Grade Children:**

At the four grade level children are able to discuss aesthetics issues through questions such as: "Could something ugly be art?" "Should the artist care whether other people appreciate what he or she is doing?" "Why might a mountain look different depending on which culture paints them?" At this stage they are not yet able to judge if an artwork is 'good' or 'bad' but are able to say if they like or dislike an artwork. Children in fourth grade are also developing a sense of humour and love comics and cartoon characters.



**Concepts that Fifth Grade Children Understand:**

Learn that sculptors are sometimes commissioned to do monumental artwork for public places; Respect that sculptural materials must be used appropriately, or the sculpture may disintegrate; Recognise the influence of geographic and climatic conditions on building materials used in private homes and public buildings; Recognise differences in artworks from a variety of cultures; Recognise the artist's intention in using ideas and using colour to create mood; Identify symbols, natural images, and objects used to create artworks; Understand and use several different ways of showing depth (overlapping differences in colour and size, rudimentary perspective); Discriminate that light, distance, relative size, and motion affect the appearance of an object.

**Suggestions for Teaching Fifth Grade Children:**

At the fifth grade level it is important for children to be able to discuss and identify strengths and weaknesses in their own work. Encourage them to use design elements and principles when involved in this type of analysis. It is important to continue to introduce many different styles of art and discuss whether something has to 'real' to express the artist's idea. Include research assignments on different artists at this year level. Fifth grade children are eager to help and take on additional responsibility, they also work well in groups and are open-minded to creative problem solving. It is therefore important to undertake group projects and to enlist students in helping to hang artworks, organise materials and also undertake special art duties such as cleaning brushes etc. Review the concepts of realism, abstraction, positive and negative space, light and shadow and texture. At this age some students lose confidence in their artistic ability because they believe their drawings are not 'real' enough. For this reason it is important to introduce one and two point perspective.

**Concepts that Sixth Grade Children Understand:**

Understand one and two point perspective concepts and want to learn how to show depth in their work; Open to learning new, difficult technical skills in drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture; Judge works by formalist (elements and principles of art), emotionalism (the viewer's emotional reaction to the artwork), and realism (the belief that the best art closely resembles reality); Understands the elements and principles of art, and is able to identify them in their artwork and that of others; Identify functions of architecture for worship, burial, and public and private use.

**Suggestions for Teaching Sixth Grade Children:**

At this age it is important to base as many projects as you can on self, such as through self-portraits and drawings of the human form (See the suggested K-6 activities for Vernon Ah Kee). It is also important to help develop abstract thinking through giving several different three-dimensional projects (See the suggested K-6 activities for Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro). Children in sixth grade also enjoy undertaking research projects on artists and presenting them to the class. In terms of artwork they respond positively to seeing their work on display. They are particularly interested in what contemporary artists are doing and have begun to form strong opinions on certain kinds of art and artists. It is important to engage children in ongoing discussions about the influence of society on the type of art that is created and the place of the artist in society. Engaging in aesthetic discussions about non-realistic works of art and different cultural standards is very important in developing aesthetic awareness. Finally, help them to progress sufficiently in their art skills so they will want to continue learning, rather than concluding that because they may not draw realistically, they are not 'artists'.

**Strategies to Engage Children in Artwork**

It is important to give children time to become familiar with an artwork. Encourage them through an open class discussion to talk about what they think is happening in the artwork. Depending on the artwork this discussion could be guided by questions such as: What do you think the artwork is about? Why do you think the artist made this artwork? What do you think the artist is trying to say or do by

creating this artwork? When do you think this artwork was created? These questions will enable the children to listen to other people's opinions and help to extend their own thinking about the work. The teacher can then follow up with some details that they know about the artist such as something about the background of the artist, their family, why they became an artist and why they have chosen this particular medium and subject matter.

***A Mystery Bag***

The teacher chooses an artwork they would like the children to engage with. They place this artwork on an easel at the front of the classroom and drape it with a black cloth. Alternatively the teacher could use two pieces of black paper to cover the artwork. One piece for the top half and the bottom piece for the second half. Through their investigation of the artist's background and the work itself they choose approximately 5 – 6 objects which they put into a 'mystery bag'. The bag should be opaque and preferably made of interesting material to attract the students' interest. As each item is pulled out of the bag the teacher asks the children to think about what the object is, the colours it has, what it means and how it makes them feel. If the children were engaging with, for example, the work of Shaun Gladwell and his investigation of place the teacher might include objects such as: a photograph of a house, a tourist brochure of Australia, the DVD of 'Australia' the movie, a pair of sunglasses, a tube of sunburn cream and a stuffed Australian animal toy. The links that could be made to his work are the notion of home and how people can feel when they do not have a home and are displaced; the tourist brochure, DVD and stuffed toy could be used to discuss how Australia is represented and whether this is the 'true' Australia; the sunglasses could be used to discuss how sunglasses can be used to protect us from sunlight but can also be used as a device by people who do not want people to see what they are thinking; the tube of sunscreen can be linked Australia's harsh conditions, another important aspect of Gladwell's work.

Once the children have discussed the objects the teacher can ask them to make associations between the objects. They may respond with comments such as the objects are all linked because they refer



to holidays, camping or travelling. Then the children can be asked about how the objects make them feel. At this stage they may say that home is their favourite place, they like watching movies with their family and they have lots of favourite stuffed toys at home which make them feel comfortable. The teacher then unveils the bottom half of the artwork and asks the children to look carefully at it at the same time encouraging the children to use design elements and principles such as: line, colour, shape, tone, texture, colour, contrast, harmony, focal point, space, perspective, balance and movement to talk about the work. The whole work is then revealed to the class and the students are encouraged to link the objects from the mystery bag to the ideas in the artwork. The teacher provides the class with further information about the artist and the artwork to further the students' knowledge. This activity can be extended to a literacy activity in which students write about their understanding of the work, what they think the artist is saying, or they may wish to pretend to be one of the characters in the work and write about what they are doing. This could take the form of a series of diary entries as they write down what they have been doing that week. A further extension could be to investigate an art movement linked to an artist's work. For example Surrealism which uses super realistic images in dreamlike settings which could be linked to Gladwell's work.

#### **Post-It Notes**

The teacher chooses three diverse artworks to display in the classroom and beside each writes down the artist's name, the title of the work, the size and the media used. Each student is given three post-it notes and a texta. If possible, it is important for each child to have a different coloured texta. As the teacher hands the textas out they put the coloured dot of the texta next to each child's name on the roll which helps to track the student's progress through this activity.

The children are asked to look carefully at the three different artworks and decide on one word which they believe describes or expresses what the artwork says to them. If the children are looking at the Australian artists in the Venice Biennale they might use: lonely

(Gladwell); powerful (Ah Kee); dead (Yonetani); and busy (Healy & Cordeiro). The children are asked to write down their words and place them around the outside of the artwork so that the image can still be seen. An important guideline for this activity is that once a word has been placed on the artwork it cannot be used again. If this happens the student will need to cross out the word they have used and write another. This activity is very good for increasing vocabulary and also provides a way for children to see how to spell words they may not have used before. The teacher can correct any misspellings and take note of which student may have trouble with spelling and vocabulary through the colour texta which has been used.

The teacher can then utilise the words that have been used by asking different students why they associated their particular word with the artwork. This can extend the discussion to how the artwork makes the children feel. Through background reading the teacher can provide more information about the artist and the artwork as part of this engagement.

#### **Guided Questions**

A series of guiding questions can be used by the teacher to help children focus on sculptural artworks which are predominant in the work of the Australian artists at the Venice Biennale this year. These can include: When was the artwork made? Who made it? What is the title of the work? What materials is the work made from? How do you think the work was made? Why was the artwork made? Where can you find the artwork? How is the artwork presented? (Photograph, Site-specific) What type of artwork is it? (e.g. painting, sculpture, installation?) When looking at 2-dimensional work questions could include: What is the subject matter of the artwork? What types of colours have been used? How do these colours make you feel? How has line been used in the artwork? What types of shapes have been used? Has tone been used in the artwork to create depth? How has the artist used space in the work? Can you tell where the light (if any) is coming from in the work? How does the work make you feel? Do you feel engaged with the subject matter of the artwork? How has the artist used the elements and principles of design to compose their work? What do you think the theme of the work is?

These activities can all provide useful and effective ways to engage children in a range of artworks and in the process learn more about art and their world.

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# Venice Biennale

Talia Seidman

Australia Venice Biennale Education Team

## Exhibition Dates

Vernissage: 3-6 June 2009

Open to the public: 7 June – 22 November 2009

## Location

Venice, Italy.

The Venice Biennale is an International exhibition that takes place every two years and showcases the artwork of artists from over 77 countries and attracts around 295,000 visitors over a five month viewing period.

The Venice Biennale exhibition evolved from a city's desire for some modern significance. Overtime, the exhibition developed into an international display of contemporary art and presently it has become a very concentrated centre of global art exchange, bringing the city to life every two years. Situated at the Giardini di Castello in Venice, Italy, the Venice Biennale, in 2009 will showcase international artists works from 77 countries. The Venice Biennale has earned the reputation as one of the most prestigious international art exhibitions. This major cultural event has played a key role in creating opportunities to showcase contemporary international talent as well as contributing to the professional development of many artists. Many exhibitors have had major international success following the exhibition.

The Venice Biennale attracts around 30,000 visitors in its first three days comprising international curators, critics, various collectors and artists. All the exhibitions are officially unveiled at the three-day art marathon known as the Vernissage. 265,000 visitors are expected to view the exhibition over the five-month viewing period.

The conceptual orientation of each edition of the Venice Biennale reflects the individual perspective of the invited curator. This year, Swedish born, Daniel Birnbaum, has been appointed to this prestigious role. According to Birnbaum, his vision for the exhibition is

to explore strings of inspiration that involve several generations and to display the roots as well as the branches that grow into a future not yet defined. (Birnbaum, 2009)

In keeping with tradition, the exhibition will reflect complex notions, issues and beliefs through a showcase of diversity and contradiction, which may provoke controversy. This will be further evidenced by many countries that display their artists' work in makeshift gallery spaces throughout the city, in addition to the main exhibitions in the main pavilions.



la Biennale di Venezia

53. Esposizione  
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## Links

**Official Venice Biennale website**

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/>

**Biography of Daniel Birnbaum**

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/directors/en/2379.html>

**Making Worlds**

The curatorial vision for Venice Biennale 2009

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/74097.html>

**Further History of La Biennale la Venezia**

<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/history/>

Some Key Terms

**Biennale**

Italian for 'every other year' and can be used to describe an event that happens every two years.

**Vernissage**

Italian word for the start of an art exhibition



# A long history in short

## The Beginning

Riccardo Selvatico, Mayor of Venice from 1890 to 1895, is credited with conceiving of a major international art exhibition to demonstrate how the arts could represent a universal language. In 1895, his vision to establish what became known as the Venice Biennale became a reality. The first exhibition, housed in the Palazzo dell'Esposizione, was designed by architect Marius De Maria and located in a public garden known as the Giardini which fronts the Grand Canal of Venice.

## The Early Years

During its early years, the Venice Biennale displayed as many as 516 paintings and sculptural pieces by invited Italian and international artists per exhibition. The exhibition layout followed the 19-century Salon presentation style with each artist exhibiting one or two works; however, the character of the exhibition changed overtime with an increasing focus on 'one man shows'. By 1914 most displays were either monographic or thematic. (Alloway 1968:52)

## A European Display

The exhibition developed rapidly in the early decades of the 20th century and became 'devoted to the celebration of official European Art' (Alloway, 1968:40) with many European countries, such as Belgium, Germany, France, Switzerland and Britain building national pavilions on the Giardini site.

## World War I

The onset of World War I (1914 – 1918), 'violated the highly developed international culture which then existed' (Alloway, 1968:52) at the 1914 Biennale. The exhibition was suspended throughout the war years, but re-opened with much ceremony in 1920. There was a flourish of interest from many countries to exhibit, with numerous countries constructing their own national pavilion.

## Between the World Wars

Between the two World Wars (1919-1938), the Italian Government took control of the Biennale from the Venice City Council. During this time, the scale of the exhibition was expanded, with the inclusion of the Music Festival in 1930, the International Film Festival in 1932 and the Theatre Festival in 1934. From 1938, Grand Prizes were also awarded for the art exhibition sections.

## World War II

The Venice Biennale halted during World War II (1939 - 1945). The Biennale re-opened in 1948, with 15 countries participating. The empty pavilions housed special exhibitions such as a French Impressionist exhibition, a Picasso retrospective and a display of the Peggy Guggenheim collection.

## 1950s and 1960s

The exhibitions of the late 1950s and early 1960s started to shift the paradigm of past exhibition convention by implementing thematic displays, focusing on certain styles, movements and techniques rather than a mix of thematic and monographic. This shift in exhibition style was influenced by a growing awareness within the international artist community of the new dominance of American post-war painting specifically Abstract Expressionism and later, Pop Art.





### Protests of the 1960s

In the late 1960s, student protests in different parts of the world gave voice and action to concerns about a range of issues including the Vietnam War, human rights and gender equality. In Venice, Venetian art students began protesting against what they perceived as the conservatism of their art training. The Venice Biennale soon became a target of the students' broader concerns. In their published manifesto, the students called for a boycott of the Venice Biennale, arguing that it was both elitist, catering to the interests of 'a limited number of people' and 'contaminated by the ... context of declining capitalism...' (Alloway, 1968:25). Bending to public pressure, Biennale officials abolished the Grand Prizes and the sales office as it was seen to commodify art and replacing monographic exhibitions with thematic displays.

### Art as a Political Voice

These changes represented just the beginning of broad scale changes made to the format of the Venice Biennale in response to the increased recognition of art as a political form. In 1974, for example, Biennale President Carlo Ripa di Meana dedicated the exhibition to the people of Chile. This action represented a cultural protest against the Chilean dictator, General Augusto Pinochet. With the backing of the Chilean armed forces, Pinochet had led a military coup in 1973 that culminated in the overthrow of the Chilean president of the time Salvador Allende. Murals, concerts and theatre performances were presented to celebrate the Chilean people and to pay respect to Salvador Allende.

### A Significant Expansion

The international significance of the Venice Biennale as a forum for the contemporary arts was reflected at its centenary in 1995 with the increase in countries seeking to participate in this bi-annual cultural dialogue. This expansion led to the inclusion of the Arsenale, a former Italian shipyard, as part of the new Biennale.

### First Females

For the first time in its 114 years history, two women, Maria De Corral and Rosa Martinez curated the 51st Venice Biennale exhibition of 2005. Both De Corral and Martinez had previously been involved with Spanish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale with De Corral curating the Pavilion exhibition in 1988 and Martinez in 2003. While De Corral has mainly worked as a director of visual arts in many institutions organising exhibitions, Martinez has worked as the Artistic Director of the Barcelona Biennale and has curated many other Biennale exhibitions in such locations as Istanbul and Santa Fe.

### A Dream Realised

Riccardo Selvatico's dream of the arts as a vehicle of universal debate has been realised and continues to evolve and challenge accepted norms. The forum for dialogue has expanded with individual exhibitions expressing national identity through controversial, complex, diverse and contradictory works. This year's 53rd exhibition continues to develop on Selvatico's vision of the arts functioning as a kind of international language. Whilst Selvatico's dream was for the rise of a universal language, it now reflects a celebration of diversity through a multitude of different voices, offering the potential for discourse, sharing and new experience.



# Facets of the Venice Biennale

## The Exhibition Spaces

The Venice Biennale comprises exhibitions at the Italian and National Pavilions at the Giardini as well as the Arsenale and other areas throughout the Venice city.

### The Giardini

The 'Giardini with all its national pavilions is not just a sampler of different notions of architecture through the ages, but also a condensed version of history itself'. (Guldemond, 2001:18) Located in the Castello district, this public garden, near the waterfront has been the traditional venue for the Biennale exhibition since 1895. Today it displays more than 70 national exhibitions in 28 pavilions, some of which are of great architectural interest such as Gerrit Rietveld's Dutch Pavilion which embodies the ideologies of the De Stijl design movement. These pavilions were built over a time span of eighty years, with Belgium building the first pavilion in 1907 and Australia building the last in 1988.

### Arsenale

A former Italian Navy port and shipyard, the Arsenale has undergone restoration since 1999 in order to create more exhibition areas. It provides a site for interactive style installation works.

### Other Venues

Countries that do not own their own pavilion in the Giardini area exhibit at various other places throughout Venice. For example this year New Zealand is holding its exhibition at the La Maddalena church, located on the Strada Nova, one of Venice's main shopping thoroughfares.

### Ludoteca

In addition to the Australian Pavilion (Shaun Gladwell) in 2009, Australia is hosting a satellite curated show, *Once Removed* at the Ludoteca. A former convent and now an After-School Care Centre, the Ludoteca is a modern warehouse space with an adjoining chapel, ideally situated on Via Garibaldi between the Giardini and the Arsenale. This is the second time that Australia has held a satellite exhibition.



Images from top: The Ludoteca,  
middle: The Australian Pavilion, bottom: Giardini

## The Artists

The below websites link to the list of artists in Birbaum's curated exhibition and a list of the national participants.

List of artists in International Group Show, curated by Daniel Birnbaum  
<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/73799.html>

List of National Participants  
<http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/exhibition/en/73805.html>

## The Curators

A curator builds the conceptual framework of an exhibition. The curator explores the deep and complex relationship between artists' work, the social and political zeitgeist, economics, space, infrastructure and society.

## The Critics

Art critics contextualise and interpret artworks, artists' ideas and practice as they are presented in exhibitions and other contexts. Critics will present different perspectives about the same art as each critic's writing is influenced by their knowledge and background, beliefs and values as well as the context in which they produce their written accounts. From these different accounts the audience is presented with different insights and points of view on why the artist may have chosen that particular theme, material practice or way of execution.

Visit the  
Venice Biennale  
through Google maps:

1. Go to Google maps website <http://maps.google.com/>
2. Type **La Biennale di Venezia** into the search bar
3. Press enter.
4. A map will appear with a pointer to the location.
5. Zoom in and out to locate where the exhibition is situated
6. Type in **Arsenale, Venice** and repeat step 3-4.
7. Choose the 'B' pointer and zoom in



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Alloway, L (1968) The Venice Biennale 1895 – 1968 from salon to goldfish bowl. Lawrence Alloway

La Biennale di Venezia (2005) 51st International Exhibition of Art, the experience of art, Marsilio Editori, Venice

La Biennale di Venezia (2005) 51st International Exhibition of Art, Always a little further, Marsilio Editori, Venice

La Biennale di Venezia (1995) 1895/1995 Centenario, Marsilio Editori, Venice

La Biennale di Venezia (1997) XLVII Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte, Marsilio Editori, Venice

La Biennale di Venezia (2007) History of the Venice Biennale's International Art Exhibition, [www.labiennale.org/en/art/history/](http://www.labiennale.org/en/art/history/) accessed May 24 2009

### Links

#### Articles on past Biennales

<http://nymag.com/arts/art/reviews/33952/>

<http://nymag.com/arts/art/reviews/34436/>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/15/arts/design/15veni.html?ei=5070&en=04dba8a82ecd6ae2&ex=1183003200&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1182878821-hw+wbxTP6VIRpo4eEoVDxw>

[http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/232386/venice\\_biennale\\_what\\_befits\\_a\\_woman/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/232386/venice_biennale_what_befits_a_woman/)

<http://www.cbc.ca/arts/artdesign/venicecurators.html>

<http://www.thecentreofattention.org/research/vartforum2.html>



# Australia at Venice

Sally Leaney

Australia Venice Biennale Education Team

## An overview

### 30 years of participation

For the last 30 years, Australia has exhibited at the Venice Biennale, presenting Australian visual arts at one of the most prestigious contemporary art exhibitions in the world. Australia was first invited to represent at the Venice Biennale in 1924, but declined the invitation because of insufficient time to prepare a body of work. Invitations for Australian participation continued, and while these invitations generated much interest, Australia did not participate. Invitations to all countries ceased during the war years, 1939-1945.

### First Exhibition

Australia's first full participation at the Venice Biennale was in 1958. The exhibition, featuring works by Arthur Streeton and Arthur Boyd, generated much criticism within Australia about the type of Australian 'style' that should be promoted to the rest of the world. Many within the Australian art world argued that there was more going on in Australian art than just the landscapes paintings of Streeton and Boyd.

### Between 1958 and 1978

Despite the interest which followed the 1958 debate, Australia did not exhibit again at the Venice Biennale until the establishment of the Australia Council for the Arts in 1978. As the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body, the Australia Council manages and funds the Australian participation at the Venice Biennale ensuring Australia's continuous representation at the Venice Biennale.

### A triumphant return

The 1978 Australian exhibition at the Venice Biennale, titled *From Nature to Art, From Art to Nature*, was situated at a site known as 'The Porch', a space comprised of three large interconnecting rooms on the south-eastern side of the Central Pavilion in the Giardini. The artists John Davis, Robert Owen and Ken Unsworth were chosen by the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council on the basis of how these artists were working with the selected themes of art and nature. For the first time a committee selected artists to represent

Australia. Such a practice continues today with the Australia Council's Visual Arts Board remaining responsible for deciding who will represent Australia at this prestigious international exhibition.

### A Pavilion in the works

In 1988, Australia's bicentennial year, the Hawke Government approved funding of \$1.2 million to build the first Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Australian architect Phillip Cox was commissioned to design the Australian Pavilion, and the Italian authorities allocated Australia the last piece of real estate in the Giardini, a space where 28 other countries also exhibit. The pavilion was intended to be launched at the 1988 Venice Biennale, however difficulties had arisen during prefabrication stage, resulting in the opening of an unfinished pavilion which 'featured a tarpaulin covering an ill-fitting section of the floor, a lack of windows and an unfinished roof' (Naylor, 2002:3). The pavilion was closed for two weeks to make repairs.

### A unique identity

For the 1990 Venice Biennale, the selection committee selected two Indigenous artists to represent Australia: Rover Thomas, an artist 'from the Kimberly area centred on the Turkey Creek community' and Trevor Nickolls whose practice combined 'both urban and regional perspectives' (Naylor, 2002:4). Highlighting the significance of such a decision, Steven Naylor wrote that the artists 'Rover Thomas and Trevor Nickolls took contemporary Indigenous art from the oldest enduring culture in the world to the newest pavilion in the 44th Venice Biennale' (Naylor, 2002:4). The choice of two Indigenous artists with such strikingly different art practice, presented international visitors with a taste of the complexity and diversity of contemporary Indigenous art. Michael O'Ferrall, curator of the 1990 exhibition commented that this selection, demonstrated that there was a marked divergence in the style of Indigenous Art, [and that]



too often the international art world was systematised into the belief ...there was a style of Aboriginal Art and we westerners could look at the dots and other symbols and read their dreamings. The 1990 Biennale exposed clearly that there was not a style that the many language groups adhered to, but many styles of distinct and rich identity and relationships to the land (Naylor, 2002:4).

### The Pavilion and beyond

Up until 2007, each edition of the Australian component of the Venice Biennale showcased only one exhibition, in one exhibition space, such as the Australian Pavilion. In 2007, three artists were presented at three different sites in Venice. The Australian Commissioner for the 2007 Australian exhibition stated: 'I believe that the selection of three artists represents an important extension of Australia's presence into spaces beyond the Pavilion, engaging the international art world with the broad scope of Australian art today' (State of the Arts, 23 May 2006).



## Australia at Venice in 2009

In 2009, Australia is exhibiting the works of five contemporary Australian artists at two separate exhibition spaces in Venice: the Giardini and the Ludoteca. The Giardini is where each nation exhibits an established artist to represent their country in the Visual Arts. The Ludoteca, a former convent in the Castello District and features a group exhibition of early career Australian artists.

### The Australian Pavilion in 2009

For 2009 the Australian Pavilion in the Giardini features the work of video and performance artist Shaun Gladwell, an established artist whose selection of thematically related videos, as well as sculptural and photographic elements, present a contemporary view of the Australian landscape. This is the second time that Gladwell's work has been selected for the Venice Biennale. In 2007, American curator Robert Storr chose Gladwell's work for the exhibition *Think with the Senses Feel with the Mind*. Gladwell also exhibited in the Sydney Biennale and Taipei Biennale.

### The Ludoteca in 2009

In addition to the exhibition of an established artist within the primary exhibition site of the Giardini, Australia has exhibited a group exhibition of early career artists at the Ludoteca. Sydney curator Felicity Fenner chose the site and has curated the Australian group exhibition, titled *Once Removed*. This exhibition features a series of installations by Vernon Ah Kee, and Ken Yonetani, as well as collaborative artists Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro.

## Artist and Curator Selection Process

The process of artist and curator selection for the Venice Biennale has evolved over time and differs from country to country. In addition to the selection of an international curator who curates the Venice Biennale as a whole, each country is required to select their own national curator and artist/s. For the 2007 Venice Biennale, the Australia Council advertised in an open call out for any artist to submit an expression of interest to exhibit. The stated requirement for artists to submit a proposal was that the artist had to have 'a significant exhibition history in Australia and internationally'. Once all proposals had been submitted the Australia Council selected contributing artists 'on the basis of the excellence and relevance of their work in the international context of the Venice Biennale 2007'.

### Selection in 2009

Given the high stakes and potential political contentiousness of any decision, the Australia Council appoints a changing selection panel of individuals from the Australian arts community, including the Venice Biennale Commissioner, three senior curators, and the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council. The panel is made up of experts in the field of visual arts who all have an extensive understanding of the international and local art sector. This year the three senior curators are Linda Michael, Tony Ellwood (Director, Queensland Art Gallery) and Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev (artistic director 2008 Biennale of Sydney). For 2009 the process for the selection differed from previous years in that it was by invitation only.

### Senior Artist

The selection panel put forward their own shortlist of senior artists who they deemed suitable to exhibit a solo show at the Australian Pavilion in the Giardini. These senior artists were each invited to submit a proposal to the panel, whereupon the panel discussed the proposals and selected Shaun Gladwell to present at the Australian Pavilion.

### Early Career Curator and Early Career Artists

For 2009, the panel also put forward a shortlist of early career curators whose suggested role was to curate a group exhibition of early career artists. The shortlisted early career curators were sent invitations to submit a proposal to the committee, in which they outlined ideas for themes and concepts, as well as suitable artists to participate in the group exhibition. After discussion, Felicity Fenner's proposal for *Once Removed*, a group exhibition featuring Vernon Ah Kee, and Ken Yonetani and collaborative artists Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro was selected.

The selection for both the Australian Pavilion artist and the group exhibition was officially announced by the Australia Council in the form of a media release.



Shaun Gladwell poster in the streets of Venice, 2009

### Some Key Terms

#### **Collaborative Artists**

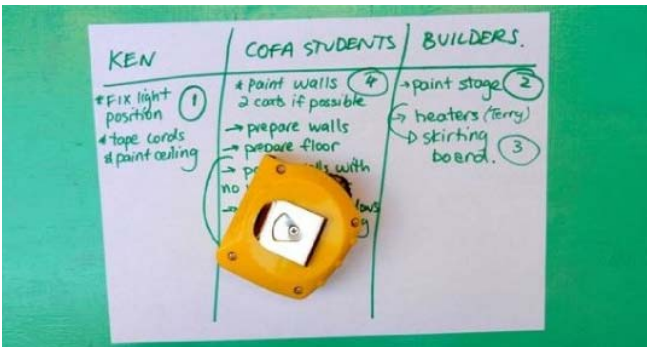
Artists who share ideas and work together to produce a body of work.

#### **Early Career Artist**

An artist who is in the early stages of their career. The artist may be known locally however their work is yet to be exhibited to overseas audiences.

#### **Established Artist**

An artist who is known both locally and overseas.



Images from top: Vernon Ah Kee's installation team  
below: Ken Yonetani installation notes

### How does it all happen?

The Australia Council for the Arts manages the Australian representation at the Venice Biennale with a small team of people.

The Australia Council appointed Doug Hall, former Director of the Queensland Art Gallery to serve as Commissioner of the 2009 Australian exhibition at the 53rd Venice Biennale. Hall began his term at the Queensland Art Gallery, (QAG) in 1987 as the youngest ever state gallery director. During his 20 year term at the QAG Hall developed large-scale contemporary art exhibitions and fostered substantial cultural ties with the Asia-Pacific Region by establishing the Asia-Pacific Triennale. As part of the role of commissioner, Hall is required to work with the Australia Council to lead the fundraising program that supplements the \$700,000 allocated to the project. Hall notes that there are three basic elements to his role at Venice: 'The selection procedure, then fund raising...then there is the advocacy of Venice: making Australia look very, very good' (Simmonds, 2008:1).

Other members of the Australia Council team include the Project Director whose role is to oversee all aspects of the Australian exhibition; Fundraising Manager whose role is to promote the exhibition and raise additional funds through donations and sponsorship; Exhibitions Manager who organises the installation of the exhibition, including freight, advice to artists about technical requirements and managing the installation and de-installation of the artwork in Venice; and Project Coordinator who deals with all logistics and administration of the exhibition.

In addition to the team at the Australia Council, the artists and curator have other people helping them out as well, such as an installation team who assists the artists to install their artwork in the exhibition spaces at Venice.

## Further Ideas

### K-6

#### Children curate their own biennale

The Venice Biennale is possibly the world's most prestigious art exhibition, which happens every two years. Just like the artists represented in this exhibition, it is important to showcase children's artworks for the school and wider communities. This can be done by arranging a Biennale at your school or preschool. After looking at pictures of Venice and the sites of the Biennale, viewing a DVD and talking about what happens there, a student or group of students should be appointed as curator(s) to manage the exhibition. It is

important to engage the children in decision making as teachers and children work together to co-construct learning.

Key decisions will be made about the selection of artworks for inclusion in the exhibition and the rationale behind these choices.

The curator(s) will:

- determine a theme for the exhibition;
- decide on criteria for inclusion of artworks (ensuring understanding that this is not a competition for the best work, but rather looking for artworks that match the theme of the exhibition).

Depending on age and experience, the curator(s) will need help from teachers, but where possible, curatorial decisions should be made by the curator(s) in consultation with the artists. The children should choose their own *Giardini* and decide how their artworks should be displayed. At this stage children could be asked to create a plan of the space, showing how and where items will be exhibited. With teachers' help, the children's artworks should be displayed with consideration of things such as how high they are mounted and the materials used for display. Remembering that children are much smaller than adults so mounting a painting two metres up a wall or placing a three dimensional construction on a column at adult shoulder height will prevent children from fully engaging with the exhibition. Helping children to make decisions and to participate in experiences such as framing their artwork helps to send a message about how we value art. The children can arrange their own

Vernissage and design and prepare posters and write and issue invitations to people that they would like to attend.

#### Curriculum links

This exploration of the concept of a biennale and the connection with Venice links to :

Creative and Visual Arts  
Human Society and the Environment  
Mathematics (mapping and spatial awareness)  
English (invitations and publicity posters)

### Secondary

#### Examine the role of the curator

- View the interview with Felicity Fenner curator of *Once Removed*.  
<http://australiavenicebiennale.com.au/once-removed>
- Summarise the curator's aim for *Once Removed*.
- Map Fenner's working method in bringing the project to completion.
- Outline key issues confronted by Fenner in making her selection.

Select one contemporary Australian artist that you think should be selected for display in the Australian Pavilion for the 2011 Venice Biennale.

- Choose 6-10 works produced by the artist (the selection could include early works and/or more recent works).
- Write a one page statement in which you set out the curatorial premise (basic idea of the exhibition); reasons for your selection and what you are hoping to convey to an international audience.

Imagine you are the curator for the 2011 Australian exhibition at the Australian Pavilion in Venice. Your role is to curate a group exhibition of Australian artists.

- Develop a concept, idea or theme for the exhibition and an exhibition title
  - Select the most appropriate Australian artists for your theme
- The exhibition should reflect something that is important to you;

what do you want to communicate to the rest of the world?

- Consider how the artists reflect your theme and do so in different ways.

In 1982 Rosalie Gascoigne represented Australia at the Venice Biennale. Her work *Scrub Country*, a 'nine-panelled wall piece constructed from wooden soft drink crates sawn into narrow slats and mounted horizontally on plywood to form orderly vertical rows"', was the centrepiece of the Australian Pavilion during the 1982 Venice Biennale. (Fenner, 1999:1). Gascoigne's practice involves collecting discarded materials, sometimes from the domestic sphere and transforming them into assemblages of visual poetry to communicate ideas about the Australian rural landscape.

- Compare Gascoigne's *Scrub Country* (1982) to that of collaborative artists Healey & Cordeiro's work *Life Span* exhibited at the Venice Biennale this year.
- Compare the themes and issues being communicated about discarded materials and their relevance to the Australian and/ global context.

Resources to help with research about Rosalie Gascoigne:

- The National Gallery of Victoria (NGV)  
Rosalie Gascoigne Education Resource:  
[www.ngv.vic.gov.au/gascoigne\\_education/images/RG\\_Introduction.pdf](http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/gascoigne_education/images/RG_Introduction.pdf)
- Art in America (February 1999)  
article on Rosalie Gascoigne by Felicity Fenner:  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1248/is\\_2\\_87/ai\\_53868149/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1248/is_2_87/ai_53868149/)
- ABC Interview  
<http://arts.abc.net.au/headspace/tv/express/gascoigne/default.htm>

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# Shaun Gladwell

Lisa Rumble

Australia Venice Biennale Education Team

Interview with Shaun Gladwell by Lisa Rumble

<http://australiavenicebiennale.com.au/shaun-gladwell-podcasts>

## Artwork

*MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence*, 2009

## Location

The Australian Pavilion, Giardini, Venice, Italy

I'm interested in what happens with the audience...I love it when I get feedback and people are not really interested in the fact that it is art...I'm interested in maybe that they relate to it on a different level... Shaun Gladwell (Woods, 2009, p49)

Shaun Gladwell's ever-evolving practice makes connections with Australian identity and landscape through performances that document relationships between humans and the environment. He expresses these interests through a range of media encompassing performance, film, video installations, painting and sculpture.

Gladwell, who grew up in Sydney's western suburbs, developed a passion for extreme sports during his adolescence and was even a sponsored skateboarder, until an accident halted this career direction. His collection of motorcycles, road bikes and skateboarding paraphernalia continue to play a significant role in his practice. What emerges is a dedication to producing an extensive body of work which makes reference to popular culture, as well as critical and historical references to artists including: Chris Burden, Casper Davis, Sidney Nolan, Joseph Beuys and Marcel Duchamp. In reference to Duchamp Gladwell recently commented "...He (Marcel Duchamp) did this thing called the Bicycle Wheel, which was this readymade, absurd sculpture...what he did with this bicycle. It is much more than the context of art...He questioned something about art that we are still trying to answer..." (Woods, 2009, p. 49)

Gladwell's body of work titled *MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence* is featured within the Australian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2009. Viewers engage with *MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence* through an installation that responds specifically to the Australian Pavilion in Venice. Influenced by his experiences in Australia's outback landscape and by the trilogy of Mad Max movies, Gladwell's installation of artwork features a suite of videos accompanied by sound, photographic and sculptural works.

Each of the ten artworks included in the exhibition can be appreciated individually, yet they play an integral role to the whole installation. A range of themes are explored in *MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence* including human form, identity, place and space, as well as contemporary cultural happenings.

Through the installation of *MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence*, the Australian Pavilion is transformed into a multi-sensory experience, powerfully engaging viewers with sound, images and objects. Gladwell sees this body of work, which has been in development since 2007, as an evolving project that is always in a state of perpetual change and growth.



*Planet and Stars Sequence: Barrier Highway* 2009. (video still)

In order to outline some of the prominent themes within *MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence*, a focus of two artworks have been selected. These are *Interceptor Surf Sequence*, 2009 and *Apology to Roadkill I-VI* 2007-2009.

Links

**Shaun Gladwell website**

<http://shaungladwell.com>

**Sherman Galleries website**

full biography of Gladwell's practice.

[http://www.shermangalleries.com.au/artists/inartists/artist\\_profile.asp?artist=gladwells](http://www.shermangalleries.com.au/artists/inartists/artist_profile.asp?artist=gladwells)



Images from top left: *Colour Test: Mundi Mundi Plains*, 2009 (video still)  
 top right: *Apology to Roadkill I-VI*, 2007-2009 (video still)  
 bottom left: *Planet and Stars Sequence: Menindee*, 2009 (video still)

### MADDESTMAXIMVS - Planet and Stars Sequence List of artworks installed at the Australian Pavilion

*Interceptor Surf Sequence*, 2009 (Video)

*Apology to Roadkill I-VI*, 2007-09 (Video)

*Roadkill Positions*, 2009 (Photographs of dead kangaroos from  
*Apology to Roadkill*, printed on a vinyl banner)

*Planet and Stars Sequence: Barrier Highway*, 2009 (Video of Gladwell creating aerosol art on the side of an outback road)

*Planet and Stars Sequence: Menindee*, 2009 (Video of Gladwell creating aerosol art in the outback)

*Absolute Event Horizon*, 2009 (Household objects used in *Planet and Stars Sequence* videos, displayed on shelves)

*Centered Pataphysical Suite*, 2009 (Multiple TV screens, displaying various figures in the act of spinning, such as breakdancing)

*Endoscopic Vanitas*, 2009, (Sculptural work with video. A rotating skull with a live video feed of the internal space of the skull)

*Last of the V8 Interceptors*, 2008 – 2009 (Car used in *Interceptor Surf Sequence* installed outside of the Australian Pavilion)

*Yamaha R6 Intersection*, 2009 (Motorcycle used in *Apology to Roadkill* installed in the wall of the Australian Pavilion)

#### Links

To view a slideshow of  
 MADDESTMAXIMVS - *Planet and Stars Sequence*  
<http://maddestmaximvs.com/>



*Interceptor Surf Sequence*, 2009

### Interceptor Surf Sequence

*Interceptor Surf Sequence* is a video artwork, existing as documentation of a performance engaged with site-specificity. Physically, the artwork is installed on a video screen that hangs suspended above a multi-levelled staircase in the Australian Pavilion.

*Interceptor Surf Sequence* follows a driver's journey in a car through open spaces, and seemingly isolated locations of the Australian landscape. The car is a *V8 Interceptor Car* - an exact replica of the car featured in the 1979 film, *Mad Max* - is used within the video to engage with the environment.

The viewer follows the action of *Interceptor Surf Sequence* occurring through a tracking shot. As the car roars over the wide landscape of central NSW, the viewer can almost feel the heat and dust that rises around the camera's lens. As the speed and panoramic view captivates the viewer, a helmeted figure clad in black motorcycle leathers emerges in slow motion out of the car window and climbs onto the roof of the vehicle. The figure is unrecognisable as the artist; however, anonymity is an important element of the protagonist's character throughout the entire body of work presented by Gladwell at the Australian pavilion.

*Interceptor Surf Sequence* exemplifies Gladwell's passion for extreme sports and his interest in popular culture, specifically the *Mad Max* films directed by George Miller. His fascination for Miller's *Mad Max* films is immediately apparent, through the depiction of the Australian outback and use of the *V8 Interceptor Car*, but this does not dominate the themes Gladwell intends to address. By using video techniques such as slow motion, Gladwell turns what could be a *Mad Max* inspired high-speed car chase into a consideration of the human body and its relationship with the landscape.





*Interceptor Surf Sequence*, 2009

### Slow Motion

Gladwell's use of slow motion is a dramatic element that illuminates and explores every move and every action. The technique of slow motion embraces the disparate nature of the human body's capabilities, allowing for human actions to be closely examined. The human form is no longer moving as fast, creating a contrast with the slowing of extreme action. The anonymous figure is captured in a pose, commenting on how humans interact with specific places and spaces. The viewer is left to contemplate the anonymity of the person, appearing tiny in the vast Australian landscape. Through this performance, Gladwell reinterprets the traditional representation of the figure within the Australian landscape, historically depicted by other artists such as Sidney Nolan.

The *V8 Interceptor Car* featured in *Interceptor Surf Sequence* will be installed or 'parked' outside the Australian Pavilion in Venice for the duration of the exhibition. The car will be covered in red desert sand gathered upon filming on location and will be the first thing viewers encounter when visiting Gladwell's exhibition.



*Apology to Roadkill I-VI, 2007-2009*

### Apology to Roadkill

*Apology to Roadkill* pursues Gladwell's interest in vehicles and the human presence in the landscape, but strikes a distinctly different direction in its homage to the 1960s work of German artist Joseph Beuys.

*Apology to Road Kill* begins with the roar of a motorcycle and a masked rider in an arid outback location. The action unfolds at slow motion speed as the rider drives past a kangaroo that lies dead on a dusty and isolated road. The rider stops, dismounts and proceeds to nurse the kangaroo in his arms creating a personal connection with the animal. Unlike the panoramic views from *Interceptor Surf Sequence*, the camera gives a close to mid shot of the masked rider, a technique that allows the viewer to relate to the internal struggle the rider is experiencing. The viewer experiences the action from a low angle, possibly to indicate that there is remorse felt for the actions that contributed to the death of the kangaroo. The sound is minimal, focusing on the rider's footsteps as he walks along the road. As his feet hit the dust, the movement engages senses such as touch, smell and taste as the viewer is immersed in an Australian landscape, conveying to international audiences the nature of outback Australia.

Issues of personal identity and the anonymity symbolised by the bike rider are evident throughout this video sequence. Also emerging is a questioning of the protagonist's character, and the influence of a masculine figure on the environment. There is a façade in place, but he is categorical: a motorcycle rider, a rebel, and an Australian, yet the anonymity which the helmet provides suggests he is not accountable to anyone. He is a stranger to the viewer, but his actions are so human and familiar that an audience feels a sense of compassion for his tender actions towards the kangaroo.



*Apology to Roadkill I-VI, 2007-2009*

### A link to Art History

*Apology to Roadkill* has a strong link with Joseph Beuys, through Gladwell's use of video and the nature of his performance. Beuys' performance from 1965, *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare*, is directly referenced by Gladwell in *Apology to Roadkill*. In the performance, Beuys cradled a dead hare, which he appeared to have a tender connection with. He proceeded to walk around the room, looking at paintings on the gallery wall, engaged in a dialogue with the hare. A seemingly pointless and absurd act which is echoed by Gladwell in his tending to the dead kangaroo on the side of an outback road.

Gladwell's work reveals new connections between objects and spaces. The dead kangaroo, the arid landscape and the roaring motorcycle are more than just symbolic items - they are communicative tools that send messages inferring a relationship between bodies and actions. The kangaroo in *Apology to Roadkill* reflects a communication between humans and the landscape by activating the environment with personal emotion.

The motor cycle featured in *Apology to Roadkill* has been installed in the wall of the Australian Pavilion and is called Yamaha R6 Intersection. The bike looks as if it has been driven at high speeds through the wall of the gallery space and became stuck half way.

The embedded motorcycle sculpturally connects to the video work bringing to life the performative qualities of *Apology to Road Kill*.

Gladwell reflects upon his choice of objects and how like Joseph Beuys he employs a sense of the ready-made as an art form. "...I'm going to use vehicles...they're kind of considered as ready-made objects, more like sculptures than vehicles...they will have an intervention with the architecture..." (Woods, 2009, p49)



## Further Ideas

### K-6

#### Exploring slow motion

Slow motion is an important part of Gladwell's video which can be used as a pretext for a drama or movement learning experience. With appropriate music, children can explore ways to demonstrate strength and action with slow, deliberate movements. If children have difficulties moving beyond the short, sharp movements that often depict these ideas, a more highly scaffolded pretext could be used. For example, children could imagine that they entered their classroom after recess to find that it had been mysteriously filled with toffee through a large hole that had developed in one corner. Explore with the children movements you would need to create to move through the toffee (deliberate and decisive but slow) or what would happen to your movement if the toffee was suddenly sucked out through the hole and it closed up again? Children could then be asked to investigate ways to draw images that indicate or reveal movement.

Continuing the exploration of motion and movement and making the connection to Gladwell's work children could be asked to bring skateboards, scooters, bikes etc for exploring movement. This again would depend on the age of the students and their interests. For example in areas where skateboards are a part of life skateboards could be the focus of the exploration of motion. This could then be extended as children explore diverse media to design and create a decorative pattern or image for their skateboard or for the skateboard they would like to own. With younger children this could be an investigation of moveable toys or toys with wheels.

With older children the above could be extended into the making of a video or DVD as children learn to use technology in their art making.

#### Curriculum links

Creative arts (visual arts, music, movement)

Physical education, Health and Personal Development (effort actions and body movements)

Science and Technology

### Secondary

The technique of slow motion in Gladwell's practice highlights the human body's relationship with the landscape. This dramatic element stretches every move and action. Ultimately, slow motion embraces the body's capabilities, allowing for details to be closely examined.

Use slow motion as a tool to understand how the human body moves and interacts with spaces. This may be conducted in the following ways:

- Draw a figure 'frozen' in a dramatic action
- Use digital still or video cameras to record each other in action poses. Use these images as the basis for drawings exploring the pose and its relationship to different landscapes, real or appropriated to match the pose
- You might also consider an extreme sport and research how and why the body moves in a certain way.

#### Manipulate time in a short animation

- Using digital cameras create a 20 - 30 second animation that demonstrates how slow motion affects the manner in which a body interacts with an environment.
- Document yourself or a friend in a simple action sequence involving a moving figure using still frame photographs or a short video.
- Uploading the images to a video editing program and experiment with editing to produce a documentation of how manipulating time alters audience perceptions.

#### Devise a performance in slow motion.

- This may involve students moving around the classroom or in the school grounds in slow motion. Students might consider how the space, human body and meaning changes with slow motion, paying particular attention to small, precise movements that can have large impact .
- Document these slow motion performances on video.

Gladwell comments on how humans interact with specific places and spaces, in particular his performances reveal new connections between bodies and actions. The anonymity of the helmeted performer in *MADDESTMAXIMVS – Planet and Stars Sequence*, also changes the relationship between humans and the land because actions become dramatic representations rather than the actions of an identifiable individual.

- Research Australian artworks that represent different relationships between humans and the landscape.
- Consider issues such as how the figures are represented, connection to the landscape, use of symbols, notions of identity and context in which the work was created. Examples such as Sidney Nolan's Kelly Series may be readily compared to the work of Gladwell.
- You may also consider the nature of your own identity, and how this may be represented visually using both figurative and environmental elements.

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# Vernon Ah Kee

Jane Cleary  
Australia Venice Biennale Education Team

Interview with Vernon Ah Kee by Jane Cleary  
<http://australiavenicebiennale.com.au/vernon-ah-kee-podcasts>

Artwork  
*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*

Location  
*Once Removed* group exhibition, The Ludoteca, Venice, Italy

I'm trying to demonstrate that Aboriginal art is more than what we think it is and that Aboriginal people, as a subject, is more than what we think it is. And, even more than that, it's a beautiful thing.  
Vernon Ah Kee (*Born In this Skin*, Message Stick; ABC, 2009)

Well known for large scale charcoal portraits of his family, Vernon Ah Kee has exhibited at various galleries across Australia including the 2008 Biennale of Sydney Revolutions – Forms that Turn. Ah Kee's art examines contemporary Aboriginal life through the lens of his own heritage and is motivated by his 'profound sense of exclusion and invisibility as an Aboriginal Australian.' (Leonard, 2008). Ah Kee states,

My work is about my life now, I use my own family to demonstrate the depth and complexity of modern Aboriginal life. I'm expanding the idea of what it means to be Aboriginal and what it means to be human. A lot of the problem this country has with Aboriginal people is that it struggles to see Aboriginal people as fully human. (Ah Kee, cited by Sorensen, 2008).

Ah Kee explains '... the Aborigine is a worthy subject to be sure, but my intention is to strip away from the image any of the romantic and exoticised notions of primitivism, virtue and most importantly, the decorative stone-age.' (Ah Kee, National Museum of Australia, 2008).

Ah Kee's widely exhibited large scale portraits of his family are inspired by the early anthropological work of Norman Tindale. Tindale photographed Ah Kee's great-grandfather, George Sibley, a Waanji man as a 'scientific record of a race widely considered to be dying out. Subjects were posed front and side and identified by numbers rather than by names' (Leonard, 2008). Ah Kee originally made portraits of both his great-grandfather and his grandfather and has continued his practice to create portraits of other family members, including himself and his children. The charcoal drawings are built up on a massive scale to confront the viewer. Ah Kee is 'motivated to redeem Tindale's images of his great-grandfather and grand father' (Leonard, 2008).

Some of Ah Kee's portraits are integrated into the body of work *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)* that is exhibited at the Venice Biennale this year. The portraits have been transferred to the underside of surfboards.



Vernon Ah Kee, 2008

## Links

### Milani Gallery

Vernon Ah Kee's representative gallery  
<http://www.milanigallery.com.au/>

### Tindale Map of Aboriginal Australia

South Australia Museum  
[http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/page/default.asp?site=2&page=TIN\\_Triba](http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/page/default.asp?site=2&page=TIN_Triba)

### *Born In this Skin*

Documentary on Vernon Ah Kee, *Message Stick*, ABC  
[www.abc.net.au/tv/messagestick/stories/s2545561.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/tv/messagestick/stories/s2545561.htm)



### Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)

Ah Kee describes *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)* as an 'examination of white Australian beach culture, particularly surfing and the role that surfing has in white ideologies, and how the ideal of the beach informs surf culture.' (Ah Kee, Arts Yarnup, p.15, 2009). Ah Kee speaks of generations past and future, focusing the viewer's gaze on the images of his ancestors and the rainforest shield designs of Far North Queensland.

*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, the title, is a direct reference to the 2005 Cronulla race riots where locals chanted 'we grew here, you flew here.' Ah Kee challenges this chant, noting that, 'we grew here you flew here is an insincere statement and they were chanting it over and over again. It's a way to exercise racism. I'm like "We grew here, say what you want but we're the fellas that grew here"' (Ah Kee, Arts Yarnup, p.15, 2009)

*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)* incorporates video, installation and text. One of the two videos features Ah Kee's three cousins dressed in bright beach gear carrying surfboards imprinted with rainforest designs and family member portraits.

Ah Kee explains the importance of the men in their beach gear: 'These guys look like they really fit in, when black people don't. Black people don't fit in. It's about territory and belonging but not fitting in at all.' (Ah Kee, Arts Yarnup, p.15, 2009).

Renowned Aboriginal surfer Dale Richards also appears in this video, surfing on one of these boards. Australian critic Rosemary Sorensen describes Richards in the video, as 'an Aboriginal surfer who appears like a new-age warrior, skimming the waves on a surfboard transformed into a weapon, with the bright markings of a shield from the rainforest region of north Queensland.' (Sorensen, 2008)

In the background viewers can hear the song *Stompin' Ground* performed by the *Warumpi Band*.

The second video features old (dead) surfboards wrapped in barbed wire. These boards are the target of repeated gunfire. The shooter's identity remains anonymous, as they are off-screen. Filmed within a typical Australian bush landscape, one board is tied to a tree, and another hangs from a tree branch (Arts Yarn Up, p.15, 2009).



*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, 2007. (video still)

#### Links

##### Dale Richards

The first Indigenous Professional Surfer, for more info  
<http://www.diversesurf.com.au/team/team/dale.php>

##### Warumpi Band

To listen to *Stompin' Ground*

[http://www.neilmurray.com.au/wb\\_sounds.html](http://www.neilmurray.com.au/wb_sounds.html)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHYbwHTGOv4>



*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, 2007. (video still)

### Some Key Terms

#### **Urban Environments**

In this instance urban environments encompass cities such as Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth but also Bourke, Broken Hill, etc. 'Urban Environments' is used to describe both major and smaller towns of people. At 30 June 2006, around one-third of all Indigenous Australians lived in Major Cities of Australia (32% or 165,800 people). A further 21% (110,600 people) lived in Inner Regional Australia and 22% (113,300 people) in Outer Regional Australia. The remainder lived in Remote Australia (9% or 47,900 people) or Very Remote Australia (15% or 79,500 people). (Figures from Australian Bureau of Statistics)

### Challenging Preconceptions

Through this body of work Ah Kee hopes to challenge the international perception of Australia. He states:

With *Venice*, I want the international audience to ask questions of Australia as a nation. How come this portrayal of beach culture in Australia doesn't look right? How come there are black people in this video when Australian beach culture is white? (Ah Kee, *Arts Yarnup*, p.15, 2009).

*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)* provides the opportunity for the viewer to question their own preconceptions of themselves and notions of Aboriginality. Ah Kee welcomes critical audience involvement and encourages viewers to challenge him. He states, 'I think people are a bit put out by the themes I deal with, and don't know how to take it, which is fine, but you want to have some critical to and fro.' (Ah Kee, *Arts Yarnup*, p.15, 2009).

When asked about his work, Ah Kee explains that 'approximately 70% of Aboriginal people in Australia live in urban environments, the other 30% is tourism' (Ah Kee, Cited by Allas, 2008). It is this 70% that Ah Kee is representing through what he describes as his 'Liberation Art' (Ah Kee, Cited by Allas, 2008). This focus can be seen in *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, a modern day story that aims to reposition Aboriginal identity.

Ah Kee's work can be read as optimistic. Ian McLean writes about Ah Kee's powerful use of language and image: 'The power of these works come from an act of Aboriginal empowerment. For Aboriginal people, at least, these statements that challenge authority and dominance are heartening. Although they engage in a centuries-old struggle, the fact that this struggle remains – undefeated – is cause enough for momentary celebration' (McLean, 2008).

It is important to note that while Ah Kee's work focuses on contemporary Aboriginal issues, his artworks explore concerns that face us all, particularly concerns of belonging

## Use of Text

At the Venice Biennale 2009 viewers will see Ah Kee's video work as well as the featured surfboards and a selection of his text-based works. The nine text-based works explore his challenge to white Australia, incorporating ideas of acceptance and tolerance.

Glenn Barkley, curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney, explains the complexity in Ah Kee's text works:

As an Australian Indigenous artist Vernon Ah Kee's work is a deliberately fused engagement between artist and viewer with notions of Indigenous politics and culture. Ah Kee's text works create poetic tension in the way that they confront the audience. Using a simple font and predominately in black and white, there are obvious precedents in the use of text as a political critique of Australian Black/White affairs. It is the act of 'reading', not just as texts but as the fusion of word and image, that completes the work: the viewer becomes implicit in the success or failure. The 'beauty' of these works is embedded in their simplicity and directness- the use not just of words, but also of design hiding a meaning beyond the obvious (Barkley, 2008)

'Ah Kee began experimenting with text as an art medium. He investigated various fonts, layouts and approaches to kerning (the process of removing the space between letters)...' (T. Allas, 2008). This practice of kerning invites the viewer to question what it is they are actually seeing and what it means

Many of Ah Kee's works require audiences to consider the connection between images and text and to explore complex social and political meanings. The text sometimes needs a second look. For instance in *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, Ah Kee references popular culture such as *I see deadly people*, playing on the well-known line *'I see dead people'* from the 1999 Hollywood movie, *The Sixth Sense* and the introduction of a word unique to Australia; deadly. The text-based work *We grew here* is a direct reference to the chanting of race related slogans documented as part of the 2005 Cronulla beach race riots. Similarly, the text-based work on exhibition at the Venice Biennale titled *Another thing*, spelt out *An other thing* in the painting, encourages the viewer to interpret these words on a deeper level.

Anna Edmundson and Margo Neale also speak about Ah Kee's use of language in their essay *Learning to be proppa: Aboriginal Artists' Collective, proppaNOW*:

In Ah Kee's work one is seduced by a cool minimal appearance deceptively underpinned by intellectual scaffolding deliberately designed to unsettle. The neutrality of his text-based work can be juxtaposed against his large sensitive portraits that reveal the same degree of restraint as the text to which they covertly refer. (Edmundson and Neale, 2007).

The following words are painted on canvases and included in Vernon Ah Kee's installation *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)* in Venice 2009:

First Person

Not a willing Participant

Hang ten

Wegrewhere

My duty is to persecute error your duty is to accept truth

Your duty is to accept me my duty is to tolerate you

An other thing



*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere), 2007*

### Some Key Terms

#### **Deadly**

'Deadly' in Aboriginal Australia, can mean excellent, great, good, etc.

#### **Juxtaposed**

To place close together or side by side, esp. for comparison or contrast.





*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, 2007. (installation view)

#### Links

##### **Vernon Ah Kee Venice Biennale Documentary**

Silver Screen Pictures follows Ah Kee's journey. Highlights include a behind the scenes look at the production of his surfboards

<http://silverscreenpictures.com.au/>

Some Key Terms

##### **ProppaNOW**

A collective of Urban Indigenous Australia Artists that includes Andrea Fisher, Richard Bell, Jennifer Herd, Tony Albert, Laurie Nilsen, Bianca Beetson. 'As Aboriginal artists they lash out at all the hypocrisy and pretence with a determined yet seductive humour.' (www.artreview.com, accessed March 2, 2009)

#### An Installation

It is through a consideration of both text and image that the viewer is able to experience Ah Kee's work as a whole.

*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)* allows viewers to walk through the artworks, to experience the scale and the mediums, to come face-to-face, quite literally, with Ah Kee's 'attempt to revision the Aborigine.' (Ah Kee, Interview with Daniel Browning, Cited by Allas, 2007)

In creating *Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, Ah Kee 'takes back control of the image of how Aboriginal people are seen. Images of the wretched, the romantic and the exotic are replaced with images of contemporary Aboriginal people' (Edmundson and Neale, 2007). Glenn Barkley again comments on the use of text in Ah Kee's work,

The portraits appear like reverse images of the text works: where the text works look outwards, the portraits internalise and make manifest the idea of the personal as political. What both streams of work have at their core is the idea of the work as text both literally and metaphysically. Ah Kee takes on the tropes that the colonisers need to document the world and objectify Indigenous people- to treat them as museum specimens. (Barkley, 2008)

Ah Kee plays with humour and language to contest stereotypical understandings of his heritage and it is through this act that he hopes to create new understandings.

As part of the *proppaNOW* collective Ah Kee is working both politically and culturally to take control. As he puts it,

People are used to seeing blackfellas having much less power, being much less assertive. Whitefellas prefer their blackfellas this way, even blackfellas prefer their blackfellas this way. I accept that our lives are lives of discomfort but what I don't agree with is that whitefellas should feel comfortable. The history of blackfellas in this country should mean they have no right to be comfortable. Anyone who's not white in this country should not feel comfortable too. If your life is comfortable you should take a hard look at yourself (Ah Kee, 2009).

## Further Ideas

### K-6

Past and future generations are important in Ah Kee's work as he explores contemporary Aboriginal life informed by his heritage. His use of portraiture can be connected to children's image-making through drawing large self portraits, possibly with the medium of charcoal. This can be extended by exploring family history through asking children to find photographs of family members from different generations and replicating those on a larger scale. Self portraits and images of relatives can be hung in exhibition format to replicate Cant Chant. As previously suggested children could then curate the exhibition and select and invite an audience. Representing these images in a contemporary context will provide a range of opportunities for discussion and research about family history, connections and cultures.

Depending on the age and experiences of the children, this could be extended to exploring the art of Indigenous Australia and the manner in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented in historical and contemporary images.

#### Curriculum links

English (preparing invitations and signage)

Human Society and the Environment

History

Visual Art

Mathematics (spatial awareness and concepts such as bigger than and smaller than)

### Secondary

At the Venice Biennale Vernon Ah Kee is exhibiting a range of works that deal with his connection to his family and his heritage. Ah Kee uses his cultural heritage to inform his works and to create art that is significant, both personally to him and to a wide range of audiences.

Students to locate, in their own histories, mementos or objects of significance to them. The aim through these objects is for students to connect themselves and their families to their art-making.

Locate an old family photo-portrait that has significance to you and your family

Explain why this photo has such significance. Responses could include: who took the photo? What did the photo mean to those photographed at the time it was taken? What does the photograph mean to you/your family now?

Transform the photograph or part of it using the following ideas as a possible starting point: take one key element of the photograph and enlarge it using drawing or photocopying; photocopy the photograph, cut out and reposition elements; recontextualize the photograph by putting it into a new environment or appropriated artwork to generate new meanings and ideas.

Similar ideas could be applied to a significant object.

Ah Kee's contemporary experience informs his art; however, aspects of his heritage are used to create meaning and cultural significance through his art-making. This informs Ah Kee's identity and allows the viewer to gain a greater understanding of his work.

In groups, research contemporary artists who use their heritage to inform their identity through their art.

Consider how the artists use their art to convey aspects of their identity.

Consider how the different qualities of media used by Ah Kee have allowed him to explore aspects of his identity more effectively

Create a work that conveys your personal identity. This could take the form of a portrait or could include images of objects and ideas that are important to you.

When making your work consider how the viewer will receive the work and how you are conveying your personal message.

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# Ken Yonetani

Elizabeth Thorpe  
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Interview with Ken Yonetani by Elizabeth Thorpe  
<http://australiavenicebiennale.com.au/ken-yonetani-podcasts>

Artwork  
*Sweet Barrier Reef*

Location  
Once Removed group exhibition, The Ludoteca, Venice, Italy

A crucial step in the solving of any environmental problem is making people aware that it exists. Some artists are attempting to do this in their own individualistic and graphic way. The Japanese-Australian artist Ken Yonetani is one of them.

Born in Japan in 1971 Ken Yonetani completed a commerce degree and began a career as a finance broker in Tokyo. After three years he left his job and searched for several years to discover his 'calling in life', which eventually he found in art. Yonetani became an apprentice under the master potter Kinjo Toshio in Okinawa. Kinjo Toshio was the son of Kinjo Jiro, one of Japan's National Living Treasures. In a recent interview, Yonetani recalls that the apprenticeship enabled him to 'get in touch with a tradition that is lost in most of Japan' (Yonetani, 2005:1). Yonetani explained:

For three years I spent all day, six days a week, working with clay. Once every three months we fired the works in a noborigama kiln that had been built by Japan National Living Treasure Kinjo Jiro, father of Kinjo Toshio. The firing lasted three days and was a real ritual. Before each firing, Kinjo Toshio would light incense, offer awamori, an Okinawan drink, to the gods of fire, and pray for a successful firing. (Yonetani, 2005:1).

Ken Yonetani has lived in Australia since 2003. He is one of many artists who have brought not only their technical expertise and skills, but also elements of their backgrounds and cultures to Australia. The connections and dialogues between Australia and Japan continue in Yonetani's work, with Japanese influences such as the meticulous and detailed approach he takes to his art-making practice

combined with his response to the Australian environment. His art incorporates Japanese influences, whilst also reflecting to his study and appreciation of the Australian environment.

One year after relocating to Australia Yonetani undertook research at the Australian Institute of Marine Science, the Reef Research Centre and James Cook University in Townsville. This period has clearly informed much of Yonetani's art, in particular his coral artworks such as *Sweet Barrier Reef*.

Since completing a Master of Arts at the Australian National University's School of Art in 2005, Yonetani has exhibited extensively in Australia. Major exhibitions have included the *Fumie-tiles* at the CSIRO Discovery, Canberra, 2003; *Fumie-Butterfly Mandala* at West Space, Melbourne, 2005; *Sweet Barrier Reef*, Art Space Sydney, 2005; and *Sugar Project-Underwater*, Phatspace, 2005. *Sweet Barrier Reef* was also included in the *2008 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, and in *Uncertain Landscapes*, exhibited at the Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne, 2008.

In 2005 Yonetani was selected to be part of the Science Week festival group exhibition *Valency*, at the CSIRO Discovery Event. For this exhibition, Yonetani and the other artists were chosen because of their diverse experiences and disciplines and their exploration



*Sweet Barrier Reef* (installation detail), 2008

of "the dual processes of art and science" and also their interaction "with science to combine knowledge with understanding through making" (CSIRO, 2005:1).

Links  
**Ken Yonetani website**  
<http://www.kenyonetani.com/>  
Some Key Terms  
**Noborigama**

A multi-chambered climbing kiln built on a slope.



*Sweet Barrier Reef* (installation view), 2008

#### Some Key Terms

##### **Ephemeral**

Lasting only a short time. An ephemeral artwork is designed to last for only a short period and often it is the artist's intention for the decay of the work to be an integral part of the work itself

##### **Fumie**

A 'picture on which to trample'. To combat the spread of Christianity in Japan during the 17th century Tokugawa authorities made suspected Christians step and trample on boards made into the likeness of Jesus or Mary to prove they were not followers of what was an outlawed religion.

#### A traditional process

Much of Yonetani's work has clear Japanese cultural and iconographic references. However, the subject matter concerning environmental, political and human issues is world wide, as for instance the Fumie-tiles exhibition. Prior to producing this body of work Yonetani consulted with CSIRO scientists working with endangered species.

For Fumie-tiles Yonetani produced 2200 handmade fragile ceramic tiles with images of six species of endangered Australian butterflies. As art critic Ann McMahon wrote: 'Butterflies have long often been used as a symbol for mortality and the ephemeral and beautiful qualities of life' (McMahon, 2005:1).

The tiles were created in the exacting traditional Japanese fumie style, taking eight months to produce and one night to destroy. Working against standard art museum practice where art objects are protected from audiences, Yonetani placed these tiles directly on the floor of the exhibition space, so that viewers were forced to tread on and destroy them. As such this work highlighted the fragility of the butterflies' existence and of humans' impact on nature. Venice Biennale curator Felicity Fenner describes Yonetani's work in the following way:

Certainly the way he integrates the traditional way of making ceramics and traditional methods and iconography with very contemporary prevalent political issues is unique. With the current debates we're having about the environmental crisis in all parts of the world, there's unlimited scope for an artist like that (Fenner, 2008:1).

### Sweetly Metaphoric

Metaphor plays a pivotal role in Yonetani's art-making process. In the chosen artwork for the Venice Biennale, *Sweet Barrier Reef*, the artwork is constructed from white sugar, icing sugar and polystyrene foam. This unusual use of sugar to form the coral-like shapes directly refers to the impact of the sugar industry and its manufacturing on the natural environment.

While in Okinawa, Yonetani lived next to sugar-cane fields and observed that every time it rained, soil and pesticides would run into the reefs with this sediment run-off from sugar plantations causing bleaching and destruction of the coral. Through diving, Yonetani also gained first-hand experience of this destruction in both the coral reefs of Okinawa and Queensland. The artist recalls free-diving in the Great Barrier Reef and noticing the 'devastating' difference in the health of the coral from his first dive in February 1998 to six years later in September 2004.

Though Yonetani uses sugar in the making of the *Sweet Barrier Reef* artworks to highlight the effect of coral bleaching and environmental destruction of reefs both in Australia and around the world, he does not want to single out the sugar industry. Rather, the artist writes that he uses sugar as a 'metaphor, linking desire, consumption, and the environment together' (Yonetani: 2005:2).

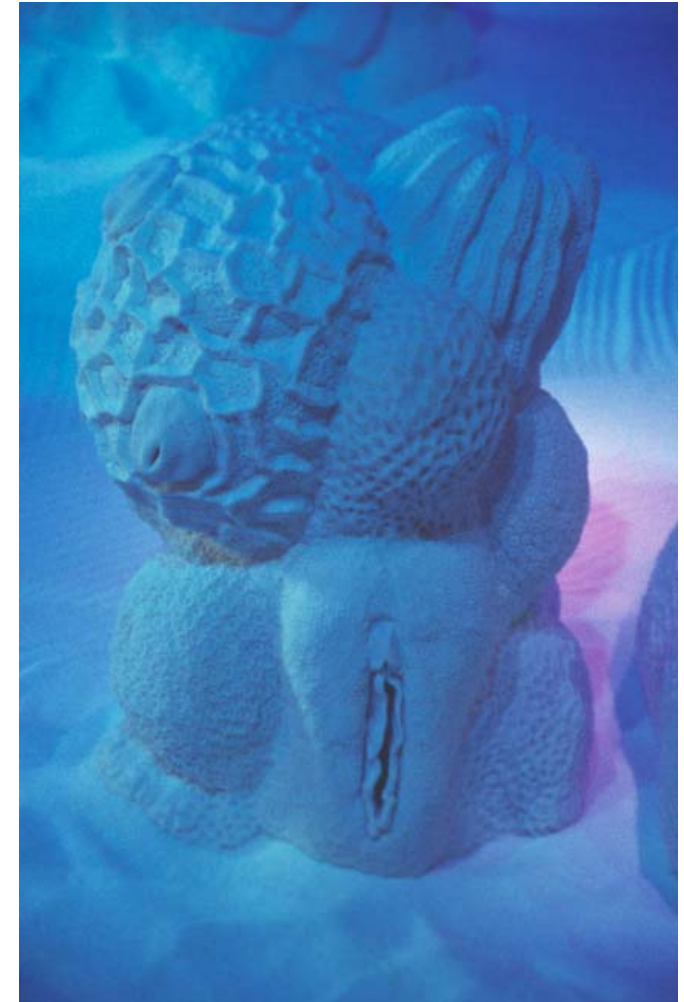
For Yonetani, sugar plays two roles: firstly, the specific damage the sugar industry is doing to the Great Barrier Reef; and secondly the part it plays in our consumerist society. Sugar becomes the embodiment of the consumerist world which we are exposed to on television and in other media.

In *Sweet Barrier Reef* the coral sculptures also appear sensual in shape and form. Yonetani comments on his choice of sugar:

I use it as a metaphor for consumerism. The sugar industry continues to increase production in accordance with growing demand globally for sugar-based products, which have, disturbingly, over the last century evolved from "special treat" foods to staples of everyday modern diets. This reflects society's more widespread desire for instant gratification, so the sexual nature of my sculptures is also closely related to this idea of consumerism as manifestation of desire. (Fenner & Yonetani, 2005:1).

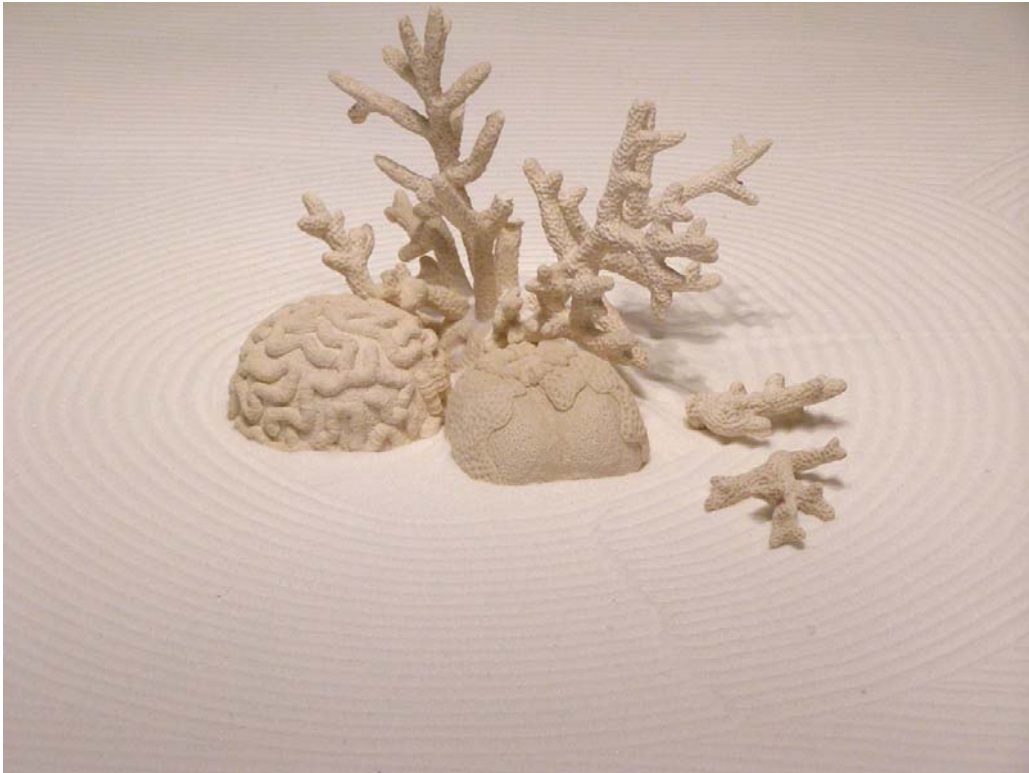
Yonetani highlighted the desire for instant gratification by including a cake-eating performance during the opening week of the exhibition of *Sweet Barrier Reef*. During the exhibition two girls dressed in glamorous white dresses, hand out what seems to be part of the coral sculptures (which are, in fact, cake) and slice them up into pieces and serve them to the audience. Again Yonetani is underscoring the correlation between consumerism and desire and the fragility of the both artwork and environment: for, like the *Fumie-tiles*, the sugar 'coral' too faces imminent destruction at the hands of the audience.

The Great Barrier Reef, a world heritage listed environment, is one of Australia's great attractions and tourist destinations. Its importance is undeniable and yet consumers' need for sugar products is so great that the well-known side effects of this industry are allowed to continue.



*Sweet Barrier Reef* (installation detail), 2008





*Sweet Barrier Reef* (installation detail), 2008

#### Some Key Terms

##### **Kare sansui**

A Japanese rock garden or dry landscaped garden, sometimes called a Zen garden. It usually comprises an enclosed shallow sand-pit containing sand, gravel, rocks, and occasionally grass and/or other natural elements. The main elements of kare sansui are rocks and sand, with the sea symbolized not by water but by sand raked in patterns that suggest rippling water and mountains.

##### **Zen**

A meditation school of Buddhism introduced to Japan by monks returning from China in the 12th century. Zen stresses the personal experience of enlightenment based on a simple life lived close to nature, and upon methods of meditation which avoid complicated rituals and complex patterns of thought.

#### Zen reflections

*Sweet Barrier Reef* not only represents Yonetani's concern with the underwater world but also echoes certain facets of the Japanese Zen garden. The sculptures of the coral sit on a bed of sugar which has been raked into lines and swirls conveying a feeling of moving water. Yonetani cites the Zen visual and spiritual practices of the Kare sansui garden. In conversation with Fenner, Yonetani states:

I was interested in the Kare because it is a dry garden, made entirely from stones rather than living plants. Its orderly design and lack of colour suggests a kind of living death, overseen by human cultural beliefs. (Fenner & Yonetani, 2005:1).

*Sweet Barrier Reef* juxtaposes the clean, disciplined, white Zen garden with the bleached dead coral. Dead coral is white coral. In many parts of Asia white is associated with death and mourning (Bolger, 2008), while in Western cultures it is colour often used for celebrations.

Here, in a similar way to the *Fumie-tiles* installation, Yonetani presents a topical, contemporary issue within an obvious traditional Japanese practice.

The fragility of the materials used in Yonetani's work, such as the tiles and sugar, contrast with the powerful themes of human demand and casual destruction, deliberately reminding the audience of the fragility of the natural world. Yonetani uses the ephemeral nature of his work to highlight the destruction of the environment.

Yonetani emphasises his concern for the environment and the impact human activity has upon it by deliberately placing audiences in an almost confrontational position with the subject matter. With *Fumie-tiles* the audience physically destroys the representations of endangered butterflies; in *Sweet Barrier Reef* they actually eat part of the artwork. As in life, where humans impact on nature, in Yonetani's exhibitions the audience has an impact on the life of the artwork.

It is appropriate that Yonetani's artwork with its focus on the human impact on the environment should be exhibited in Venice, where recent human negligence and activity is putting much of the ancient city's architectural fabric at risk. Industrial effluent and human induced changes to water flows are working away at the city's foundations, unseen and ignored by many who enjoy its heritage and beauty. Yonetani's artwork can be clearly seen as a warning cry for the world's fragile environments.



## Further Ideas

K-6

### Exploration of the meaning of colours

Different colours can mean different things to different people. For example, death of the coral is symbolized by using white in Yonetani's work and culture, but black is the colour that is often associated with death in an Australian context. Bring some examples or pictures of environmental print in which colour plays an important role (e.g. a stop sign, an exit sign, traffic lights, do not enter). After speaking with the children about the meanings that the images convey, and discussing why Yonetani has used white, encourage the children to collect examples of colour making meaning through the next few days and bring them in for display and discussion. This could start with a walk around the school exploring the use of colour. The children could bring photographs, drawings or examples cut from newspapers, magazines or their local community. This could be extended to arts experiences as children investigate colour in paint and with younger children this could become an exploration of mixing and making colour and using colour to convey meaning via the medium of paint.

### Curriculum links

English (multiliteracies, especially visual literacy)  
Visual arts (exploring properties and use of colour in paintings)

### Exploration of fragility and change in natural objects

This work is about destruction, fragility and change in natural objects. It's interesting to think about how things can change and be destroyed by human intervention. To explore these ideas, children could break tiles with a hammer (remembering safety precautions like goggles and breaking the tiles Like Yonetani's fumie-butterfly mandala while they are inside a strong material bag) and use the small fragments to rebuild a group mosaic for a tabletop or something functional in the classroom. Notions of decomposition and colour can be investigated by suspending some absorbent paper over a container consisting of a mixture of vegetable dyes of several colours, with the tip of the paper kept in the container. Over time, the children can map the reverse capillary action as the dye separates into its component parts.

### Curriculum links

Science and Technology  
(change, decomposition, environmental effects)  
Mathematics (spatial awareness)

### Secondary

In his artwork Yonetani explores his concerns for the environment, in particular the fragility of the environment, the human impact upon it, and the impact of consumerism upon both environment and society.

- Consider how Yonetani recreates an underwater world made of sugar in a gallery.
- Compare his work with the approaches taken by Australian artists James Darling and Lesley Forwood, Janet Laurence and Kylie Stillman, who also exhibited with Yonetani at the *2008 Adelaide Biennial, Handle with Care* exhibition depicting their concerns about the environment.
- Further information about the 2008 Adelaide Biennial:

<http://www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/handlewithcare/EX08%20AdelaideBiennial.html>

### Your environment

- Make a list in your *Visual Arts Diary* of any environmental issues in your local area.
- Consider how people have impacted upon both the built and natural environment. For inspiration you may wish to research photographs from the past and compare and contrast them with contemporary photographs or images from your local area. Has the environment changed? Is it for better or for worse?
- Consider using readily available materials relevant to your issue to create an artwork. Yonetani uses a common material, sugar, to create his work. Is there a relevant, common material which you could similarly use?
- How would you emphasise the importance of your issue?
- What will happen to your area if the environmental problem is not fixed?

At the Venice Biennale, Ken Yonetani is exhibiting with Vernon Ah Kee, and Claire Healy & Sean Cordiero under the title *Once Removed*. These artists from diverse backgrounds and disciplines have each approached the themes of displacement, human impact and environmental issues very differently.

- Explore how the exhibition title *Once Removed* is conveyed in Yonetani's artwork.
- Compare Yonetani's interpretation of the Venice Biennale theme with those of Vernon Ah Kee and collaborative artists Claire Healy & Sean Cordiero.

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# Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

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Interview with Healy & Cordeiro by Jessica Haly  
<http://australiavenicebiennale.com.au/claire-and-sean-podcasts>

Artwork  
*Life Span*

Location  
*Once Removed* group exhibition, The Ludoteca, Venice, Italy

Sydney sculpture and installation artists Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro transform viewers' perceptions of the domestic sphere by manipulating everyday objects into overwhelming structures.

Healy & Cordeiro have collaboratively produced site-specific work since 2003. Their exciting practice is constantly unfolding; creating ordered large-scale structures from the clutter of everyday life.

Healy & Cordeiro have lived and worked in various parts of the world due to receiving the prestigious Helen Lempriere Travelling Arts Scholarship (2003), the Kunsterhaus Bethanien Residency in Berlin (2006) and Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship (2006) plus an array of other highly prized grants.

Their experiences while travelling have influenced their practice. According to Wendy Walker, author of the Samstag catalogue essay, Healy & Cordeiro's travel experiences have reinforced their 'fundamental concern with complex notions of home (in both a material and cultural sense) and in particular its impermanency' (Walker, 2006).

By stacking, bundling, collecting, and deconstructing everyday objects, Healy & Cordeiro transform viewers' perceptions of common spaces and materials in the domestic sphere. Healy & Cordeiro installations commonly 'reuse, reform and contain the everyday consumables and detritus of modern life' (OzArts, 2009).



*Deceased Estate, 2004*

Healy & Cordeiro explore the private spaces and objects of the domestic setting, as well as the public and social collective memories placed on these settings. Their fascination with the domestic sphere is prevalent in previous works such as the powerfully executed installations, *The Cordial Home Project* (2003) and *Deceased Estate* (2004).

Links

**Claire Healy & Sean Coreiro website**

<http://www.claireandsean.com/>

Some Key Terms

**Detritus**

any disintegrated material; debris.



*The Cordial Home Project, 2004*  
Top: Before installation, Below: Installation view

### In an orderly fashion

For *The Cordial Home Project* Healy & Cordeiro dismantled a condemned house, piece by piece, and then reassembled the materials of the house at a Sydney gallery (Artspace) into a neat flat, rectangular pile. The installation was reconstructed in the order in which a house is built with the bricks at the bottom, wood, walls and pipes in the middle, then roof tiles on the top. Wendy Walker appropriately describes the installation as 'a house in its most reductive form; distilled, fragmented and ultimately obsolete' (Walker, 2006).

Healy & Cordeiro's deconstruction of a house into a neat rectangular pile of materials redefines and strips away the emotional and economic significance typically associated with the home.

According to Healy & Cordeiro the installation: documents the transformation of a house from family home to unwanted scrap to art object. In deconstructing meanings of the home, there is a misguided yearning to discover its real essence as suggested once in its title. (Gallasch, 2003:8)

*Deceased Estate*, 2004, is another of Healy & Cordeiro's installations that transforms everyday objects and materials into an aesthetically appealing and imposing sculpture.

This installation contains the entire contents of a four-storey abandoned artists' warehouse in Weil am Rhein, Germany. Healy & Cordeiro bundled together the contents with red rope creating an enormous tightly bound pile of objects, which they installed at the Glashaus Gallery in 2004.

On a global scale, as with all of their installations, the objects are recognisable and accessible to a range of viewers. The process of collecting, rearranging, constructing, relocating and documenting the work is fundamental to Healy & Cordeiro's practice.



## Life Span

In their latest work, *Life Span* featured in the Australian *Once Removed* exhibition at the Venice Biennale, Healy & Cordeiro continue to explore the detritus of the domestic sphere, but also provoke the viewer to consider the life span of the soon to be extinct VHS video tape.

The site-specific artwork consists of a towering cubic mass of 195,774 VHS video cassette tapes measuring 6m x 4m x 6m, positioned within a place of contemplation: the Ludoteca, a deconsecrated chapel in a former convent in the city of Venice.

*Life Span's* monumental structure stands beneath a beautiful ornate fresco on the ceiling. The fresco is dramatically lit, highlighting the space in which the installation is exhibited, implying that the space itself is also important to the artwork.

The exhibition location in a chapel provides the viewer with a space where they can reminisce about old movie titles and memories, contemplate the significance of objects in life and ponder the life expectancy of humans, the environment and technology.

The installation centres attention on the VHS video tapes creating a large scale public archive of the obsolete object, according to Healy & Cordeiro, 'monumental in scale but personal in meaning' (Moss, 2009:5). The video titles that are visible when viewing the work ranges from films, documentaries, self-help videos, music videos, to fitness videos and were personally selected by Healy and Cordeiro (pers. comm., Urban and O'Hara, 2009).

The title *Life Span* intends to lead the viewer to consider the brief existence of an almost obsolete technology; the VHS video tape and the consumption of not only this piece of technology, but all things one may consume in a life time.

The number of video cassette tapes is also an important detail of the work and informs its title : the 195,774 VHS video cassette tapes used in the installation is equal to an approximate viewing time of 587,322 hours. These hours represent the 2008 global average life expectancy of 66.1 years.

Recently, many nations have recognised the potential for damage in consumer-oriented, materialistic behaviour; in particular, the environmental effect of increasing amounts of landfill and carbon admissions.

*Life Span* invites viewers to consider the quantity of objects consumed over a lifetime. In this case the VHS video tapes are almost obsolete, making a brief appearance over a couple of generations. Healy & Cordeiro further reiterate this event. By displacing this previously loved object of entertainment and escapism into a cubic mass, audiences are prompted, according to Healy and Cordeiro, 'to explore temporality, change and passing.' (Moss, 2009:5)

From a Generation X perspective, VHS cassettes are fascinating in that they were both created, and made obsolete, within our lifetime, reflecting our own obsolescence and mortality. (Healy & Cordeiro, Moss, 2009)

## Installing Life Span

The transportation, installation and construction of *Life Span* in Venice has been a challenging process for Healy & Cordeiro and the Australia Council team. The monumental piece contains 30 tonnes of videocassette tapes and took over three and a half months to construct, with the majority of VHS videos bought and collected from recycling depots in Sydney and others obtained from Athens.

In the months leading up to the Biennale, Healy & Cordeiro began gluing half of the video collection into small cubes (about 1m x 1m x 1m) in Sydney. These cubes were then transported to Venice, in shipping containers. As access into Venice is limited, the tonnes of cassette tapes were conveyed using small boats on narrow canals. The remaining collection was constructed on-site in Venice completing the monumental sculpture. (pers. comm., Urban and O'Hara, 2009).



*Life Span* (detail), 2009

## Some Key Terms

### Environment

may refer either to actual physical surroundings or to social or cultural background factors.

### Obsolete

no longer in general use; fallen into disuse.

### Technology

the sum of the ways in which social groups provide themselves with the material objects of their civilisation.

# Further Ideas

## K-6

### Children's installation

These artists make large, site specific artworks from everyday objects. This involves concepts of collecting, categorizing, bundling and recycling materials from everyday life to ascribe different meanings. Children need to view and discuss a diverse range of images of the works of the artists. To extend the discussion and further explore these ideas, children could collect a range of everyday recyclable objects from home and the local environment (over a defined period of time, e.g. a week).

- As a group, the children sort the materials into categories that they determine according to the materials that have been collected.
- Explore ways in which these can be bundled together and re-presented. Then,
- They should then investigate the local environment and determine the best way to present their bundled materials as an installation. This could involve sketching plans for how and where the work could be installed.

To investigate the temporal nature of some artworks, photographs of the final installation could be taken for a permanent record of the event prior to the materials being recycled. The installation itself and/or the photographic records could form part of an exhibition curated by the children, such as that outlined above.

If disposable cameras were used to take the photographs, this could form the basis of further discussion about what to do with the cameras once the photographs have been taken.

### Curriculum links

Visual arts

Human Society and the Environment (the local environment, recycling)

Mathematics (space, volume, mass, compacting things)

English (signage and publicity for the exhibition)

## Secondary

### Artmaking

Using multiples of obsolete, discarded or recyclable objects create a site-specific installation. Consider the installation's relationship with the site and the significance of the materials used to audiences.

Use the consumption of resources by individuals and the group as a starting point to generate artmaking ideas.

Consider inventive ways of representing and recording consumption and its consequences through drawing, sculpture, photography and digital techniques. Consider the range of tangible things which are consumed including food, clothing, shoes, make-up, fuels and technology. Consider how this consumption changes over time.

### Critical and Historical

Examine reviews and critical comments made about the Venice Biennale work of Healy & Cordeiro, including those by the curator Felicity Fenner. Compare these to ideas presented by the artists. Is there a difference of opinion and interpretation amongst audiences? What issues/debates arise?

Why might the mass of 195,774 VHS videos used to make *Life Span* be considered a monument? Discuss the social significance of the VHS videos installed in a chapel.

*Life Span* urges the viewer to reflect on the effect human impact has on the world. Discuss the issues of mass consumption over a life time. Calculate how much of one object you would consume over a lifetime.

Through their art, Healy & Cordeiro comment on the changing behaviour of humans and the personal significance objects can have on one's life. Explore the notion that people today remember and live life through objects and technology. (Suggested resources include Tracey Moffatt, *Memento*, and Mark Drew.)

### Objects in the domestic sphere

Compare and analyse the techniques Healy & Cordeiro use in *The Cordial Home Project*, *Deceased Estate* and *Life Span*, creating order from everyday clutter. List words to describe the structural qualities of these installations (such as bundle, tie, stack, deconstruction, or assembly.)

Brainstorm a list of these words and choose one for the basis of a sculpture project. Then find an object which works within the criteria below and make a sculpture: obsolete, everyday object, from the domestic setting, holds personal significance/possesses memories. Consider the idea of multiples and collecting. In your sculpture explore the meaning and relationship of the object between the word, you and the public (audience) significance.

### Consumption, Lifespan and Obsolescence

Healy & Cordeiro explore the life span of objects and humans. Develop an artwork based on the consumption of an object over your life span examining the effects of time, with the object physically and/or socially deteriorating. Consider how different media could be used to explore this concept.

Interview a parent/grandparent/family friend/neighbour about an object or technology that has become obsolete over their lifetime. What are their memories and connections to that object? What will become obsolete over your lifetime? How is technology affecting and changing our social, cultural and physical environments? How is technology transforming the making of art and audience experience?

### Memories and Objects

Analyse the home, materially, culturally and personally. What significance does a house, and the contents of a house, hold? Cast a small simple household object using a mould, creating sculptures which can be used to draw from, leaving a trace, a memory of the object. (Suggested resources include Cordial Home Project, Deceased Estate, Gordon Matt-Clark, Black Saturday News articles, and Tim Silver.)

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# Image Credits

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**Vernon Ah Kee**

*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, 2007-2009

Video Production Still

Video (triple screen) 7:00 mins

Director: Suzanne Howard

Camera: Mark Broadbent & Suzanne Howard

Sound Design: David M Thomas

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery

Page 6

**Ken Yonetani**

Sweet Barrier Reef (detail), 2005

Sugar 160 x 1200 x 600 cm

Installation view, Artspace, Sydney

Courtesy the artist and Dianne Tanzer Gallery

Photography: Darren Hopton

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**Venice City, Italy**

Courtesy of Australia Council

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**Venice City, Italy**

Courtesy Andrew Elphick

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**The Ludoteca, Australian Pavilion and Giardini**

Courtesy of Australia Council

Page 14 & 16

**Maps of Venice**

Courtesy Australia Council

Page 17

**Shaun Gladwell poster, Venice**

Photo: Ella Condon

Courtesy of Australia Council

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**Installation images, Venice Biennale 2009**

Photo: Ella Condon

Courtesy of Australia Council

Page 21

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Planet and Stars Sequence: Barrier Highway*, 2009

Production still

Videography: Gotaro Uematsu

Photography: Josh Raymond

Courtesy the artist & Anna Schwartz Gallery

Page 22

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Colour Test: Mundi Mundi*, 2009

Photography: Josh Raymond

Courtesy the artist & Anna Schwartz Gallery

Page 22

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Apology to Roadkill I-VI*, 2007-2009

Production still

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

Photography: Josh Raymond

Cinematography: Gotaro Uematsu

Page 22

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Planet and Stars Sequence: Merindee*, 2009

Production still

Videography: Gotaro Uematsu

Photography: Josh Raymond

Courtesy the artist & Anna Schwartz Gallery

Page 23 & 24

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Interceptor Surf Sequence*, 2009

Production still

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

Photography: Josh Raymond

Cinematography: Gotaro Uematsu

Page 26 & 26

**Shaun Gladwell**

*Apology to Roadkill I-VI*, 2007-2009

Production still

Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery

Photography: Josh Raymond

Cinematography: Gotaro Uematsu

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**Vernon Ah Kee at the Biennale of Sydney 2008**

Photo: Katrina James

Page 30, 31, 32 & 33

**Vernon Ah Kee**

*Cant Chant (Wegrewhere)*, 2007-2009

Video Production Still

Video (triple screen) 7:00 mins

Director: Suzanne Howard

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Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery

Page 36, 37 & 39

**Ken Yonetani**

*Sweet Barrier Reef (detail)*, 2008

Sugar 110 x 1250 x 360 cm

Installation view, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art

Courtesy the artist and Dianne Tanzer Gallery

Photography: Julia Yonetani

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**Ken Yonetani**

Sweet Barrier Reef (detail), 2005

Sugar 160 x 1200 x 600 cm

Installation view, Artspace, Sydney

Courtesy the artist and Dianne Tanzer Gallery

Photography: Darren Hopton

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**Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro**

*Deceased Estate*, 2004

Entire found detritus from artists' warehouse

500 x 560 x 650 cm

Glashaus Gallery, Weil am Rhein, Germany

Courtesy the artists and Barry Keldoulis Gallery

Photography: Christian Schnur

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**Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro**

*The Cordial Home Project*, 2004

Installation view (before and after), Artspace,

Sydney

Photo: Liz Ham

Courtesy the artists and Barry Keldoulis Gallery

Page 44

**Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro**

*Life Span (detail)*, 2009

VHS video cassettes, silicone 480 x 318 x 524 cm

Courtesy the artists and Barry Keldoulis Gallery

Photography: Claire Healy & Sean Cordeiro

# Acknowledgements

## The Education Team

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Andrew Elphick

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Paoli Smith

## The Education Team would like to thank

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The Australia Council for the Arts is the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body. We support and promote the practice and enjoyment of the arts. The Australia Council has managed and funded Australian representation for more than 30 years. Previous Australian representatives at the Venice Biennale have included Judy Watson, Howard Arkley, Patricia Piccinini, Ricky Swallow, Susan Norrie, Callum Morton and Daniel von Sturmer.

[www.australiacouncil.gov.au](http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au)



The College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales is one of Australia's premier art and design schools located in Sydney, Australia. Shaun Gladwell, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro are graduates of COFA – their Australian representation at the Venice Biennale highlights the crucial role of training institutions in the development of the next generation of artists, designers and theorists.

[www.cofa.unsw.edu.au](http://www.cofa.unsw.edu.au)

# Feedback Form

We welcome your feedback. Please complete the following feedback form and return by email to [venice2009@australiacouncil.gov.au](mailto:venice2009@australiacouncil.gov.au) or fax to 02 9215 9074  
To download this form as a Word document, visit [www.venicebiennale.com.au/education-hub](http://www.venicebiennale.com.au/education-hub)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
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Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

## How did you hear about the Venice Biennale Education Kit?

Letter                      Email                      Other – please specify

Did you use the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource?                      Yes /No

## How useful did you find the:

Printable pdf document	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
Artist interviews	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
Facebook social networking page	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
National Schools Project	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful
Printed Visual Resource	Not Useful	Somewhat Useful	Very Useful

**What could be done to improve the education resource for the 2011 Venice Biennale?**

## Was the content of the Venice Biennale 2009 Education Resource relevant to your teaching in the classroom?

Not Useful                      Somewhat Useful                      Very Useful

## Did you find the 'Further Ideas' useful?

Not Relevant                      Somewhat Relevant                      Very Relevant

## Were the 'Further Ideas' relevant to your students?

Not Relevant                      Somewhat Relevant                      Very Relevant

Was the kit used by teachers of other disciplines at your school?                      Yes/No

If Yes, what department?

Did you visit the Australia Venice Biennale 2009 website?                      Yes/No

If yes, was the content useful?                      Not Useful                      Somewhat Useful                      Very Useful

**Are there any other Education Kits that you have found useful?  
Please include date and producer. eg. Biennale of Sydney 2008**

Did your students visit the Australia Venice Biennale 2009 website?                      Yes/No

Did you visit the Australia Venice Biennale Education Facebook page?                      Yes/No

Did your students visit the Australia Venice Biennale Education Facebook page?                      Yes/No

**Further comments**