



Saltwater Country Introduction for schools



About the exhibition

Many exhibitions of Australian Aboriginal art have focused on the intrinsic and embedded nature of Aboriginal culture and creative expression as a reflection of the connectedness to land and place of birth. The term 'country' has come to be understood as an all-encompassing word in English to explain this relationship. What is less understood by many audiences is the equally strong cultural connectedness to the sea and how equally profound this relationship is. The exhibition *Saltwater Country* explores these diverse and potent connections as expressed by artists from Queensland and Torres Strait Islands.

The long coastline of the large state of Queensland is much more than a defining border in shaping the development and style of artworks produced there. This saltwater country is a place of bounty and trade where the waters facilitate movement and contact, the tidal and seasonal flows structure the rhythms of the day and the year, and the dramatic times of flood and storm bring terror and destruction but also renewal and change. The geography of sweeping beaches, rocky headlands, dense mangroves, isolated islands and coral reefs, and the expansive river systems that spill in flood have been critical in shaping both colonial history and, over a far longer time, Indigenous cultures.

As beautiful as the sub-tropical beaches are, this coastline is also a dramatically contested place. The resonance of the beach as the historic site of first contact and colonial engagement layers the way that a number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists symbolically and conceptually render this meeting point between land and sea. Many reflect through their work that it is also a site charged with more contemporary concerns over environmental climate change, pollution and human impact.

The artists represented in this exhibition demonstrate the strength and diversity of contemporary Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art practice through artworks that express a deep connection to place as well as highlighting broader environmental, cultural and political concerns. In making artworks about these issues, these artists are redefining the practice of caring for country in contemporary ways and in so doing create new insights and relevance for wider audiences.

Virginia Rigney
Co-Curator, *Saltwater Country*

RELEVANCE FOR SCHOOLS

A visit to the exhibition *Saltwater Country* will provide teachers and students with a rich and challenging experience of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on place and identity. Central to the exhibition is the concept of 'country'. Country is not easily defined but in broad terms it encompasses the fundamental connection of people, place and story and it is these themes that may be drawn out for student engagement.

All of the artists in the *Saltwater Country* exhibition respond to a sense of place; to a lived, remembered or researched connection to country that goes to the core of their identity as individuals and as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Relationships to country are complex and interrelated. Country is both physical and metaphysical, it is not just seen but felt and known. Generated by ancestral beings, country is inherently family - flesh and blood, living and breathing, ancient and contemporary, embodying heritage and lineage, prescribing social obligations and motivating behaviour. It cannot be separated from self.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people talk about having a subjective relationship to country as opposed to an objective relationship to land. People belong to country, not the other way round, and this relationship has been described as dynamic, immersive and mnemonic. Caring for country can be seen in these terms as an active process of maintaining a living relationship with country. The process of colonisation separated people from country in a physical sense but not in a cultural sense. For many, their connections to country and the cultural identity this informs are nurtured and invigorated through their art practice.

This Education Resource has been developed to assist teachers and students to engage with the identified themes of 'Art and Place', 'Art and People' and 'Art and Story' through suggested activities for both the gallery and the classroom. The activities are aimed at junior and senior levels and may be adapted or sequenced to suit the needs of specific classroom programming.

For **students of Art** the exhibition presents the work of 16 artists working across a diverse range of media including drawing, painting, printmaking, photography, video, performance and sculpture, providing a wealth of material to explore the key curricula concepts of Artist, Artwork, Audience and the World. The breadth and diversity of work in the exhibition offers the potential to develop any number of focussed case studies such as the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) art practice, photography, art and politics, art and identity.

For **students of History** the exhibition offers a stimulating way to engage students with reading and assessing artworks as source documents that offer unique perspectives and viewpoints. Many artists in the exhibition draw on historical records such as maps, photographs, government documents and written accounts, reinterpreting or re-presenting them to highlight different experiences of the past while others shed light on little known or unrecorded stories. Historical research is a fundamental part of the artistic process for these artists and the artworks produced underscore the importance of acknowledging ATSI perspectives on accepted historical narratives. Through their work, artists communicate the significance of country and place to ATSI people and draw attention to the nature and impact of colonial experiences.

For **students of Geography** the exhibition offers the possibility of exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views about the relationship between humans and the environment, and to reflect on the extent to which

the environment contributes to a sense of identity. Artists in the exhibition make artworks that communicate their families' and their own experiences of and connections to Thursday Island, Darnley Island, Lockhart River, Gulf of Carpentaria, Fraser Island and Hervey Bay.

For **students of Civics and Citizenship** the exhibition poses questions about how a person's identity can be shaped by the different cultural, religious and/or social groups to which they belong. Some of the artists in the exhibition make artworks based on significant events, politics, social issues and concerns of identity and belonging.

For **students of Technology** the exhibition demonstrates how digital technologies can be applied to art making and design, and used for capturing and sharing information through digital stories.

Key themes for students

Art & place

The exhibition *Saltwater Country* offers the possibility of exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views about current and historical relationships between humans and the environment.

Some artists in the exhibition respond to place, creating artworks that reflect acute observation of their natural environments, a knowledge gained through intimate, lived experience attentive to the tell-tale idiosyncrasies of the waterways, the tides, the weather, animal life and plant life. These are strong emotional and cultural bonds to place, in some cases informed by totemic relationships and bound by custodial responsibilities passed down through generations, in others fuelled by family histories and a visceral sensitivity to place. While some artists in the exhibition create works drawing on cultural traditions and conventions of communicating country, others have built a highly personal visual language to convey the complexity of this relationship. A number of artists also draw our attention to the coast as a site of colonial encounter between Indigenous populations and settlers. Still others comment on the different ways these coastal regions have been used since colonial times and the changes to the environment caused through human impact such as pollution and global warming.

○ FRAMING QUESTIONS

How do human beings relate to the environment aesthetically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually?

How do these connections contribute to feelings of identity and belonging?

How are these connections and relationships represented and expressed?

How do these representations reflect and influence people's perceptions and world views?

What are the different ways places are perceived, used, experienced and cared for?

What has been the impact of different people on different places at different times?

Saltwater Country Introduction for schools

○ JUNIOR ACTIVITY

Exploring the relationship of people to their environment and understanding connection to a particular place as important for individual and cultural identity.

ISLAND LIFE

Locate Torres Strait Islands on a map.
Count and **name** all the islands.

Find works by Torres Strait Islander artists in the exhibition and use as a starting point for a research project about Torres Strait Islands. **Analyse** what the artists have communicated about their relationship to their environment through their artworks. **Describe** the qualities of place evoked through the use of materials, subject matter, patterns and colours and **investigate** the stories told through dance, song, objects and designs.

Research other images and stories about this region from books and on the internet.

Keep a record of your findings by taking notes, writing down your thoughts, making sketches and collecting images.

Create a large Torres Strait Islands class mural of pictures, drawings, photos and stories that incorporates everyone's findings and responses. **Include** images and stories of the artworks by Torres Strait Islanders represented in *Saltwater Country*.

[Click to view](#)

- > Erub Arts > Alick Tipoti
- > Ken Thaiday > Brian Robinson

○ SENIOR ACTIVITY

Recognising the different relationships to place over time and understanding the impact of these changes on ecology and community.

DRAWING A LINE IN THE SAND

Many of the artists in the exhibition incorporate the beach or the coastline in their artworks.

As a class, **brainstorm** a list of words and impressions that describe the beach and beach environment.

Research some iconic images of the beach in Australian art and literature, e.g. Charles Meere's *Australian beach pattern* (1940), Max Dupain's *Sunbaker* (1937)... **Consider** what makes these representations iconic. **Discuss** what they express about the place of the beach in the popular imagination of the Australian public and in relationship to national identity. **Compare** these well-known images to representations of the beach in the exhibition *Saltwater Country*.

Analyse how these Indigenous artists have reinterpreted the significance of the coastline and the beach in their work to highlight a different relationship. What is this relationship?

[Click to view](#)

- > Vernon Ah Kee > Michael Cook
- > Fiona Foley > Judy Watson

PERSONAL AND CULTURAL TERRAIN

Artists in *Saltwater Country* have made artworks as a response to particular places. **Identify** these places and **locate** them all on a geographical map.

Brainstorm some other forms of maps e.g. street directories, google map, weather map, topographical map, political map, Indigenous language group map. **Discuss** as a class: What is the different information contained in these maps and how do we read them? How do they inform a perception of place?

Consider the artworks in *Saltwater Country* as 'maps' that communicate a relationship to country.

Investigate how the different artists have brought their personal and cultural perspectives to bear on their representations of place. What is the visual language they use to communicate their perspective?

Working in pairs, **choose** two very different works to analyse in depth. Using the results of this analysis, **create** a class concept map that diagrammatically records the different relationships to place expressed by artists in *Saltwater Country*. Where do concerns, impressions, experiences diverge, where do they overlap or link? What are the major themes that emerge?

CARING FOR COUNTRY

Look at a map of Queensland and **identify** the different ecosystems such as river systems, coastal areas, islands, rainforest, mangroves...

Research the different land usages and **investigate** how this has changed over time. What has been the ecological impact of this?

Discuss the difference between landscape and 'country' and **investigate** what is meant by the term 'caring for country'.

Brainstorm some current ecological concerns related to the environment and **investigate** how artists in *Saltwater Country* have drawn attention to these concerns.

What is your relationship to the environment?
How do you care for it?

Make an artwork that describes how you can care for country.

Art & people

Many artists in the exhibition express personal and cultural identity as a sense of belonging informed by family heritage and present community. Others, while drawing on this, also highlight the broader issues of identity, exposing the construction of cultural stereotypes fuelled by a history of race relations.

Artists in the exhibition assert the power to self-represent or draw attention to misrepresentations, challenging historical and contemporary definitions of Aboriginality. A number of the artists in the exhibition use photography as a way to communicate their ideas. Historically, photography was almost exclusively a tool of mainstream European society and played a pivotal role in recording, authenticating and constructing a particular world view which subsequently gave rise to a dominant perception of Aboriginal people. In more recent times Indigenous people have moved behind the camera, taking the role of documenter of their own culture while reinterpreting and recreating an alternate photographic history of race.

○ FRAMING QUESTIONS

What do we mean by identity? Is it just how you look and when and where you were born?

How else do we define ourselves?
How are we defined by others?

What is the connection between personal, cultural and social identity?

What is a stereotype?
How are these perceptions formed?

What is meant by a Eurocentric world view?
How has this world view had an impact on the perception of Aboriginal identity?

○ JUNIOR ACTIVITY

Exploring personal identity as a sense of belonging informed by family and community.

RELATIVELY SPEAKING

Consider how the people around you contribute to your sense of belonging and personal identity.

Brainstorm and **list** other things that contribute to your sense of who you are, e.g. your interests, activities, world view, family and cultural heritage.

Choose one artwork from the exhibition *Saltwater Country*. **Analyse** how the artist has communicated something about their identity through their artwork. **Consider** cultural, social and personal identity and the significance of family and country. In pairs, **role play** being the artist and answer questions from your classmates about your chosen artwork and yourself. Then swap over.

Create your own artwork that expresses something of your individual, family and cultural identity and **write** an artist's statement to accompany it.

○ SENIOR ACTIVITY

Understanding the complex machinations of constructed identity and cultural stereotyping fuelled by race relations.

"For far too long Aboriginal people have been inaccurately and unflatteringly imprisoned in historical and visual narratives by non-Aboriginal people who have presumed to speak for them, but have instead shackled them with restrictive stereotypes. Aboriginal artists are assuming a necessary role in the supervision and dissemination of their own self representation and history."

Stephen Gilchrist, *Art and Australia*
Vol 46, No. 4, Winter 2009

FOCUS ON IDENTITY

Research the representation of Indigenous people in Australian art since colonisation.

Discuss what is meant by the term 'identity politics'.

Consider: How is identity constructed and by whom? How can identity be created through stories and images? How does it feel to be misrepresented or misunderstood?

Investigate how artists in *Saltwater Country* have communicated something of their personal and cultural identity through their artworks. How have they drawn attention to the complexities of identity politics in their works?

Find all the artists from the exhibition who have incorporated or referenced photography in their work. **Compare and contrast** the styles and techniques employed. **Investigate** how these artists have used this medium to critique historical images or create new images of Aboriginal people.

Research the work of other Indigenous photographers, e.g. Tracey Moffatt, Rea, Brenda Croft, Darren Siwes, Dianne Jones, Destiny Deacon, Ricky Maynard.

Choose one photographic work by an artist in *Saltwater Country* and one by another Indigenous photographer to research in depth. **Present** your findings as a powerpoint presentation to the class.

As a class, **curate** an exhibition that explores Indigenous photographic practice. **Brainstorm** and identify some broad themes based on the presentations and then work in groups to prepare a digital display.

[Click to view](#)

- > **Vernon Ah Kee** > **Michael Cook**
- > **Fiona Foley** > **Daniel Boyd**

Art & story

Powerful forces of stories that bind cultures together.

All of the artists in the exhibition *Saltwater Country* have stories to tell. Some draw on well-known stories from their cultural traditions, reviving and revitalising these stories and incorporating them within contemporary world views, others draw on the everyday stories of personal experiences.

Many artists in the exhibition *Saltwater Country* draw on historical records such as maps, photographs, government documents and written accounts, reinterpreting or re-presenting them to highlight different experiences of the past while others shed light on little known or unrecorded stories. Still others reference museum collections and museology in the creation of their work, critiquing and commenting upon the way that institutions nationally and internationally have framed and structured the histories of their culture.

Historical research is a fundamental part of the artistic process for these artists, and the artworks produced underscore the importance of acknowledging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives of accepted historical narratives.

Through their work, artists communicate the significance of country and place to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and draw attention to the nature and impact of colonial experiences.

○ FRAMING QUESTIONS

How do stories define us personally and culturally?

How are stories told?

Why are some stories better known than others?

What are some of the stories told by artists in the exhibition?

○ JUNIOR ACTIVITY

Understanding that stories define us personally and culturally and that storytelling can take many different forms.

Consider the stories your family tells about you and your relatives? What sorts of stories do you share with your friends? How do these stories define our perceptions of ourselves and our place in the world?

List as many different types and traditions of storytelling as you can, e.g. fairy tales, cautionary tales, myths and legends, epics... What sort of information is contained in these stories and how do we relate to them?

Discuss: If a story is not written down, how may it be kept for retelling?

Brainstorm some other ways stories can be recorded, e.g. through dance and song and art.

Choose an artist from the exhibition *Saltwater Country* and research their personal stories, the stories they reference in their artworks, and the stories their artworks tell.

Saltwater Country is supported by short-filmed interviews with some of the artists in the exhibition. The films are available on the *Saltwater Country* website, www.saltwatercountry.org, or on mobile devices at the gallery, as part of the exhibition display.

In groups of three, **create** your own short film, of not more than five minutes, using a laptop or mobile device. One person can be the artist/interviewee, the second can be the interviewer and the third can do the film/production. Together, **draft** a list of questions for the interviewer to ask the artist and **consider** what the responses may be. Before filming, rehearse your interview.

○ SENIOR ACTIVITY

Understanding history as a collection of stories and recognising that some stories have been privileged over time at the expense of other viewpoints and perspectives.

History can be perceived as a collection of stories told by different people at different times.

Discuss: How is history recorded and by whom?

Investigate the term 'grand narrative' and **formulate** a definition. **Explain** how grand narratives can underpin and frame world views and encode relationships to people and place. **Brainstorm** some of the grand narratives of Australian history such as discovery, exploration, gold rushes, bushrangers. How have they come about? **Consider** how they contribute to a particular sense of national identity.

Analyse how the artists in *Saltwater Country* have drawn on cultural narratives to communicate contemporary perceptions of the Queensland coastal region. **Consider** the artworks as historical documents that can be read. What stories do they tell?

Create your own artwork that encourages a re-reading of an accepted or established narrative of history or an acknowledgement of an alternate history.

DANIEL BOYD

Sydney NSW



Daniel Boyd, 2014
Photography: Mick Richards

I grew up in Cairns, and my relatives... we all grew up by the sea, so we are saltwater people. My family live at Giangurra on the way to Yarrabah⁽¹⁾, so whenever we have a family gathering we go back there. We are known as the 'beach dogs' and so we have that kind of connection to the beach and the water. We hunt food in the saltwater – it's a big part of who we are as a people. I think we have a special connection to the water.

My approach to history painting is more lateral. The idea that the surface is made up of multiple lenses – cultural lenses – it's a way of bringing more people into the work and it's a way of telling a story about who I am, but also connects to as many people as possible.

Looking at the history of Blackbirding⁽²⁾ – in Australia making a work that relates to that is also connecting all those people back in Queensland and northern New South Wales who have that connection to that history. In 2011, I was artist-in-residence at the Natural History Museum in London. My starting point [was] the watercolours of the First Fleet collection. Not everyone knows that the Museum has close to 30,000 individuals (skeletal remains) in their basement. I think it was really good for the Museum to allow me to work with this material that was quite a sensitive subject. That's where the watercolour of the fish comes from – the First Fleet collection. Basically the fish didn't look too happy to be in the library in the Natural History Museum in the special

collections, so I had to bring the fish back to Sydney – so that's where that work came from.

Daniel Boyd
Sydney, April 2014

Notes

- (1) Yarrabah is just south of Cairns in far north Queensland.
- (2) Blackbirding is a term used to refer to kidnapping or coercing people through deception to work as labourers.

Image

Daniel BOYD *Untitled* 2012
Oil and archival glue on photocopy in Natural History Museum skull box
Dimensions: 25 x 35 x 6 cm (total size, comprising two elements)
Courtesy the artist & Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney. Photography: Ivan Buljan



For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Compare and **contrast** these images. What is similar? What is different?

Count the girls and the flutes.

Imagine you are one of the girls and **describe** what you are wearing and what you are doing.

Suggest why the artist would want to cover these images with dots and **describe** how it influences the way you look at the image.

Imagine being the artist and describe the process of making this work.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

History is made up of many individual stories that form part of larger cultural narratives.

Find out about the practice of 'Blackbirding' that brought many people to work in Australia. Daniel Boyd's family came from Pentecost Islands this way.

Research your family's history. **Talk** to your parents, grandparents and other relatives about their lives.

Choose a family photograph or object of significance and find out all about it.

Create an artwork that tells a family story based on this photograph or object.

Images

(top right) Daniel BOYD
Untitled 2014
Oil and archival glue on linen
Dimensions: 97 x 84 cm
Private collection and courtesy of the artist
Photography: Jessica Maurer

(bottom right) Daniel BOYD
Untitled 2013
Oil and archival glue on polyester
Dimensions: 198 x 168 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney
Photography: Ivan Buljan

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Boyd has accessed images and objects from museum collections to create these works.

Discuss the role of museums in society as keeping houses for cultural histories.

Consider: What sorts of stories are told in museums, how are they told and who tells them?

How do objects end up in museums? Who collects them and why do they collect them?

Evaluate the significance of the dotting technique he uses. Where else in Indigenous art practice is this convention used and what is its purpose?

Suggest what Boyd means by the 'cultural lens' and **discuss** how our cultural background can impact on our perception and world view.

Boyd has used a box designed to store human skulls as a display for the fish painting. **Suggest** why he would choose to do this. **Explain** how this presentation encourages a particular interpretation of the image.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Investigate Boyd's body of work and **identify** his major concerns.

Analyse how he has drawn on historical imagery to create his artworks.

Research the debates about repatriation of Indigenous cultural material, particularly of human remains.

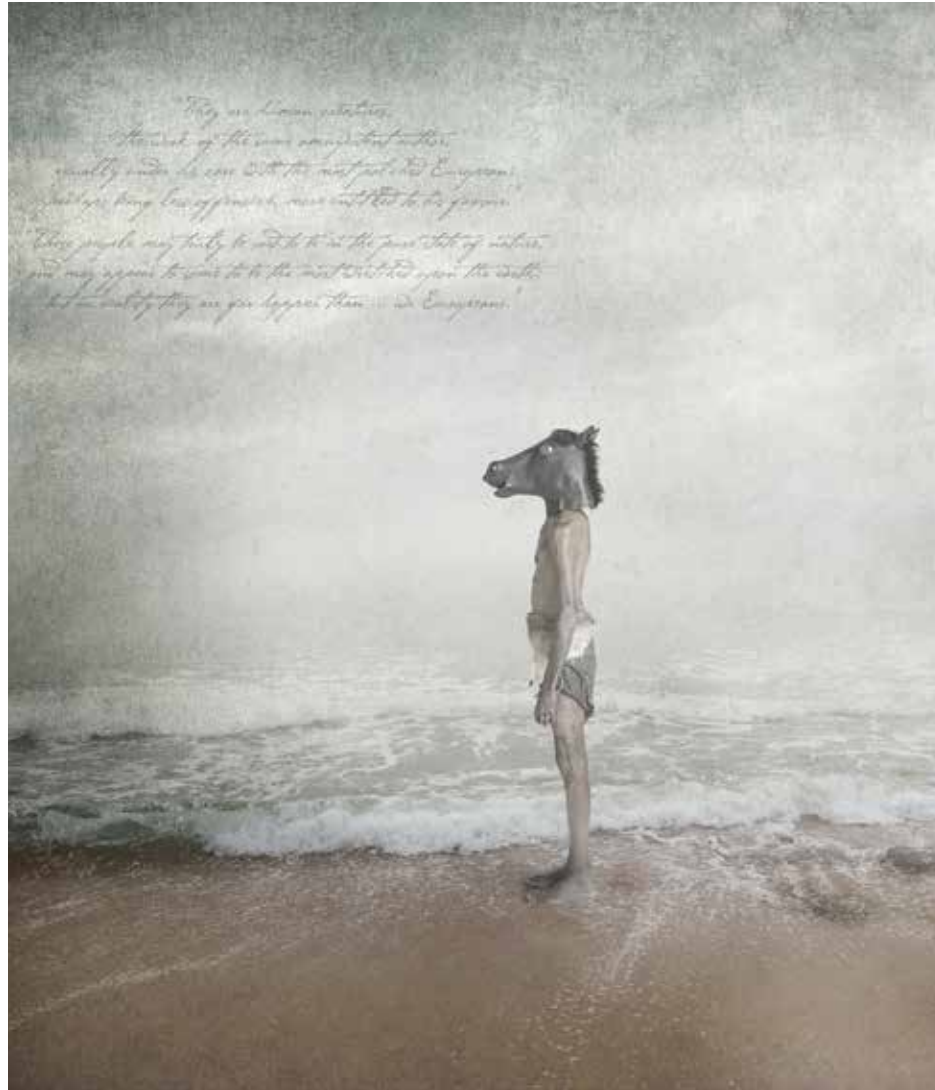
Research other artists who have interacted with museum collections e.g. African American artist Fred Wilson's work *Mining the Museum* and **identify** the issues of representation they have highlighted.

Visit a local museum or access a collection online. **Choose** a number of objects or images and re-work or re-contextualise them to highlight different interpretations. **Write** an explanatory text panel to accompany. **Mount** a classroom museum display of alternate histories.



MICHAEL COOK

Sunshine Coast QLD



My project *Civilised* came from when I first saw a quote from a book of Captain Cook's journals and how he saw Aboriginal people for the first time. I started doing some research on the different explorers that came to Australia – the Dutch, the Spanish, Portuguese and French, and how they wrote about seeing Aboriginal people for the first time.

I start with an idea and I start with a blank canvas and I build the images up. Kind of like a painter but I use photographs to do that. I build the images in layers, which means shooting the people separately and all the elements get added in.

My idea for *Civilised*, and the style of how I presented *Civilised*, came from going through the National Gallery in London and looking at all the 1600 and 1700 era paintings. They used to keep the people quite sharp and would really dull down and soften the backgrounds in the paintings. What I have done with the series is that I have kept the people sharp and the foreground quite sharp and the background drops off.

I have used the beach scene, because that is where white people and Aboriginal people first saw each other. I wanted this mysterious soft feel as to where these people have come from. I have lost the horizon altogether to kind of give you a soft depth into the image to make it look a little mysterious in the background.

Michael Cook

Moffatt Beach, 16 April 2014



Text from *Civilised #1* (far left)

*"They are human creatures,
the work of the same omnipotent author,
equally under his care with the most
polished European;
perhaps being less offensive, more
entitled to his favour."
"These people may truly be said to be in
the pure state of nature,
and may appear to some to be the most
wretched upon the earth;
but in reality they are far happier than ...
we Europeans."*

Michael Cook, 2014
Photography: Virginia Rigney

Image

Michael COOK
Civilised #1 2012 (detail)
Inkjet print on paper
Dimensions: 123 x 109 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and
Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Imagine standing on this beach and describe the sights, sounds and smells.

What is the weather like? What time of day is it?

Suggest who the people on the shore might be and **describe** what they are doing.

Examine the clothing they are wearing. How is it different to the clothing you are wearing?

List all the objects and animals you can see. How do they hint at the people's identity?

Imagine these people could talk? What might they say?

Take it in turns to **pose** like one of the figures and **tell a story** about yourself and what you can see from your place on the shore.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Investigate the story of Australia's discovery in books and on the internet.

Imagine an encounter between Indigenous people and Europeans when they first arrived on Australian shores. What might they have thought or said about each other?

In groups, **role play** a possible scenario and **act** it out for the class.

Use this as a starting point for a photo or collage work about the encounter.

Images

(top right) Michael COOK
Civilised #2 2012
Inkjet print on paper
Dimensions: 123 x 109 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

(bottom right) Michael COOK
Civilised #13 2012
Inkjet print on paper
Dimensions: 123 x 109 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Describe the mood of these images and **analyse** the qualities that contribute to this.

Describe the clothing and the objects. How do they contribute to a sense of narrative?

Imagine the process of making this photographic work. Has it been shot on location or in a studio? What makes you think this?

Cook spent many years working as a fashion photographer. How has this experience influenced his current art practice?

Explain the strategies Michael Cook has employed to encourage an Aboriginal point-of-view. Why would he do this?

Read the text in the images and **suggest** where this may have been sourced and why it has been included.

Discuss the meaning of the word 'civilised'. **Consider** it as both a noun and a verb. Why do you think the artist chose this word as the title for this series of images?.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Find examples of studio shots of Aboriginal people produced in the 19th century by photographers such as J.W. Lindt and **compare and contrast** with Cook's photos.

Consider motivation, production, reception and distribution of these images.

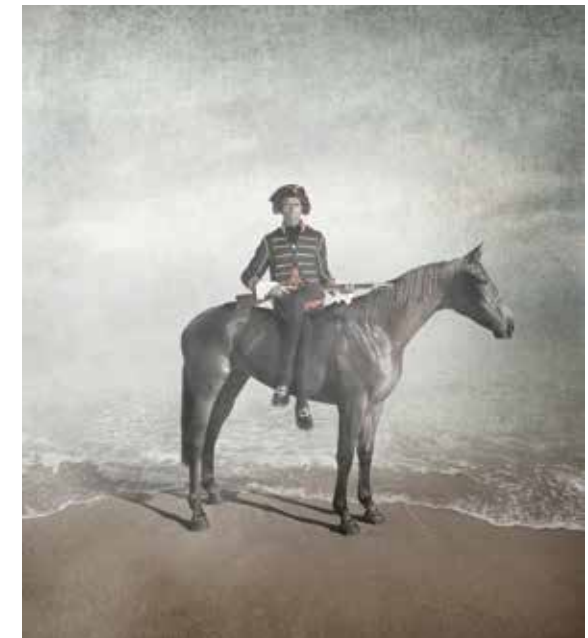
Discuss what narratives and perceptions are being promoted and how they are being communicated.

Choose an iconic work from the history of Australian art or a well-known narrative of Australian history.

Create a digital image or painting that communicates a different perspective to the one portrayed.

Text from *Civilised #2* (top right):

"They saw a big mob of logs that were huge, very big with lots of devils on them. The devils looked strange. Their skin looked different and they were white..."



MEGAN COPE

Melbourne VIC



Megan Cope, 2014 / Photography: Alex Chomicz

My arts practice investigates issues relating to identity, environment and mapping practices. The video works that I have developed and have titled *Toponymic Interventions* are a natural extension of my mapping works. I am interested in place names and people's names and how they relate to space, and I am very interested in the movement of people and the changing environment.

I usually talk about Aboriginal people because I am Aboriginal, and I guess it is normal to investigate that aspect of my history.

In my physical maps I write Aboriginal language groups', people's and place names back into the landscape. With these projections I am taking it one step further and projecting it into the physical space. Some of them can be quite haunting.

With my painting works, I talk about the sea level rising with a four-degree rise in temperature. So on a low island, I think even more and more about reclamation of these islands via the sea, imagining it in a completely different way.

Megan Cope

South Stradbroke Island, 19 March 2014

Image

Megan COPE *jumpinpin* 2014
Acrylic on canvas. Dimensions: 77 x 77 cm (circular)
Courtesy of the artist. Photography: Murray Waite



For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Choose words from the following list to best describe the mood of Cope's video work – brash, ghostly, noisy, ethereal, poetic, loud, gentle, bossy, raucous. Give a reason for your choices.

Read the words that appear in the artwork aloud. Is this a language you are familiar with?

Suggest why the artist chose to project these words onto the landscape rather than use a more familiar or permanent sort of signage.

Describe the letterforms and **propose** why the artist chose this particular typeface or font. Where else might you see letterforms like these?

Picture the words written in bold capital letters and **describe** how this would change the mood of the work.

Imagine and **describe** a soundtrack for this video work.

Suggest why the artist chose a circular format for her painting as opposed to the more usual square or rectangular format.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Do you speak more than one language at home?
Is English your first language?

Discuss the impact of colonisation on Indigenous languages.

Cope has used Yugambeh language in her artwork. **Find out** where this language was spoken prior to European settlement.

The Yugambeh Museum, Queensland, recently launched a digital Yugambeh language application. **Access** this resource online and practice speaking words from the Yugambeh language:

http://www.yugambeh.com/resources_language.php

Make a class set of Pictionary-style cards with Yugambeh words and corresponding images on separate cards.

Create at least 3 pairs each to contribute to the pack and **experiment** with different typefaces and letterforms to best convey the meaning of the word.

Play a game of Memory or Snap (where an image and a word are a snap) using the cards.

Investigate other Indigenous languages spoken today and create additional Pictionary-style card sets.

For Seniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Discuss how the act of naming can be an act of claiming that denotes ownership and belonging.

Look at a map of Queensland. Consider how the different places were named. What does Australia mean and how was this name arrived at for this continent. Has Australia always been called Australia? **Brainstorm** some other names for Australia, e.g. Gondwanaland and New Holland. What does the term 'Terra Nullius' refer to? When was that name applied to Australia and by whom?

Compare a map of Australia that denotes the states and territories with a map of Indigenous language groups and **identify** the language groups where you live.

Survey and list the names of streets, towns, parks, rivers and other public places in your region. **Research** the origins of these names. How many are derived from Aboriginal languages? How many commemorate people from history or reference plants or animals. Why were these names chosen?

Choose a place you are familiar with and collect a number of different maps of that area, e.g. street map, topographical map, weather map.

Use these maps as a starting point to make an artwork in reference to the following statement by *Saltwater Country* curator Virginia Rigney, 'Maps are often statements of power that represent historical, political and cultural understandings of place'.

Include letterforms in your final work.

Research the Scottish ship, *Cambus Wallace*, and its connection to Stradbroke Island, Queensland.

Research the impact of rising waters on Island communities. Choose one example to discuss.

Images

(top) Megan COPE
Toponymic Interventions #3 2014 (still)
Single channel video (8:39 mins)
Courtesy of the artist
Photography: Alex Chomicz

(bottom) Megan COPE
Toponymic Interventions #3 2014 (still)
Single channel video (8:39 mins)
Courtesy of the artist
Photography: Alex Chomicz



ERUB ARTS

Darnley Island



Erub Artists, 2014
Photography: Jo-Anne Driessens

Image

ERUB ARTS
Weres 2014
Mixed media installation: Ghost net made from found fishing nets; screen printed fabric; and video projection
Dimensions: 128 x 295 x 115 cm
Fabric: 410 x 102 cm
Photography: Murray Waite

The *Weres* artwork (2014) is constructed from derelict and abandoned fishing nets known as 'ghost nets'. These fishing nets drift the ocean's currents, indiscriminately catching and killing marine life, delivering a devastating impact on coastlines and reefs along the north of Australia.

Using a cross-cultural and collaborative model, Erub Arts is leading the way in large sculptural forms constructed using this medium, producing woven, wrapped and twined statements about traditional and contemporary island life.

A weres is a traditional fishing tool used to scoop schooling sardines. Men would wade into the water holding the epi



(handle) and with the beating of werir (sardine directors) the sardines would be chased through the kerem pek (opening) into the bamboo scoop.

The supersized scoop speaks not only of traditional practices, but how with the upsizing of boats, fishing gear and nets, the world's oceans are being scoured by super-trawlers taking everything in their path – this *Weres* artwork is a stark reminder that the mandate for sustainable, responsible fishing belongs to all people.

The vision of this work highlights the transparent qualities of the ocean as the sardines are schooling, bringing movement to a static display. The *Weres* artwork has a

welded steel frame, wrapped in net. The pek (bamboo slats) which create the sides are remodelled rope.

The colourful cloth drape has been screen-printed with images of tidelines and traditional stone fish traps which surround Erub. The words from a traditional weres song, which is danced at celebrations, sits alongside a circling mass of sardines.

Erub Arts
Statement, July 2014

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Describe the different components of this artwork.

Compare and contrast the different media used. **Identify** the video, printmaking, painting and sculpting techniques and **describe** the different effects created by each.

Discover which elements or objects appear in more than one component. **Identify** which elements are still and which are moving and **analyse** the effect of combining these different approaches.

Compare the underwater video to the background of the textile. How has a watery feel been evoked?

Find the weres. **Describe** how it has been made and **discuss** how it is used to catch fish.

In groups, **mime** the process of fishing for sardines where one person pretends to hold the scoop while others act as sardine directors or sardines.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Find out everything you can about traditional Indigenous fishing tools including bamboo and stone wall traps, nets and hooks. **Investigate** how they were made and how they were used.

Watch a nature program about ocean life or **find** images in books of different sorts of fish.

Make drawings of all your findings and **choose** some to turn into small lino prints.

Using watercolours, make washes to represent the sea and the currents. Once dry, **overlay** with images of fish and traps to tell a story about traditional fishing practices.

Use a combination of printing and drawing to create a sense of movement.

Compose a short verse or fishing song to go with your picture.

For Seniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research commercial fishing methods used in Australian oceans today such as drift netting and compare them to traditional practices such as the use of fish traps.

Compare the pros and cons of these different fishing practices and **evaluate** their impact on marine environments. How environmentally sustainable are these different methods?

Investigate what the terms 'ghost fishing' and the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch' refer to.

Research the work of ranger groups in Cape York and Torres Strait Islands.

Find out about the community arts organisation Ghost Nets Australia.

Investigate traditional fishing and weaving practices of the Torres Strait Islands. These traditional objects are often seen displayed in art galleries and museums.

Does this change the way we interpret and understand these items?

Analyse how the people of Erub have combined traditional practices and contemporary materials to create artworks that raise awareness about the impact of marine debris on marine life.

Make a collaborative class artwork that raises awareness about unsustainable fishing practices. Combine sculptural, audio visual and 2D elements. **Work in teams** to devise the separate components.

Image

ERUB ARTS

Weres 2014 (detail of video projection)

Mixed media installation: Ghost net made from found fishing nets; screen printed fabric; and video projection. Size variable

This project has received financial assistance from the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland's Backing Indigenous Arts program.



Erub Artists:
Milla Anson
Emma Gela
Florence Gutchen
Lavinia Ketchell
Nancy Kiwat
Nancy Naawi
Racy Oui-Pitt
Alma Sailor
Ellarose Savage
Jimmy Thaiday
Vision:
Louisa Anson

Cultural and Logistic
Liaison:
Kapua Gutchen Snr.
Walter Lui
Moa Sailor
Collaborating Artist:
Ceferino Sabatino
Facilitating Artist:
Lynnette Griffiths
Mentor Artist:
Judy Watson

Support Staff:
Solomon Charlie
Community:
Lieu Anson
Robert Mye
Joshua Thaiday
Kathleen Ketchell
Documentation: Jo-Anne
Driessens
Courtesy of Erub Arts,
Darnley Island
Arts Centre

FIONA FOLEY

Hervey Bay, QLD



Image

Fiona FOLEY *The Oyster Fishermen #2* 2011
Inkjet print on Hahnemühle paper
Dimensions: 85 x 103 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, and
Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

I came across a chapter in this book (*Something like slavery? Queensland's Aboriginal child workers, 1842–1945*. Author, Dr Shirleene Robinson)⁽¹⁾, about the fishing industry in Queensland which reached its height in the 1880s. There were two big industries ... the bêche-de-mer and the pearling industry, and what used to happen, unbeknownst to a lot of people here in Queensland, is that they used to kidnap Aboriginal people – men, women and children up along the east coast – and they would take them on these luggers (shipping vessels). Up to 40 Aboriginal people on these boats, and they would work them really hard, and also there was a lot of brutality that took place on these boats – so it's another aspect of this hidden history that we have here in this country.

Through reading that particular chapter, it fascinated me ... they did take people from Fraser Island and so I thought, wouldn't it be great historically to make a work that is related to this history but also to do the work back on my country at Hervey Bay and Fraser Island.

The idea for the work, the photographic series *The Oyster Fishermen*, sat with me for about two years and I scouted out different locations on the Island and the mainland, and I had the dress made, based on an old mission dress from a black-and-white historical photograph of an Aboriginal woman in a mission. There are threads that run through the work. There is the blue dress – that is the only colour, the rest is sepia tone. I wanted a sense of the violence that was being perpetrated against this woman. There are other threads – there are three fish heads relating to the three men in the series ... and the 'hiddenness' of the woman and the reveal, and I wanted that to be a part of the work as well.



Fiona Foley, 2012
Photography: Mick Richards

Notes

This is an edited transcript of an interview with Fiona Foley in association with the exhibition *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia*, Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, June 2013, and originally shown on QAGOMA TV, <http://tv.qagoma.qld.gov.au/2013/05/29/fiona-foley-artist-interview-the-oyster-fishermen-2011/>

Reproduced with kind permission of the artist and Queensland Art Gallery / Gallery of Modern Art

(1) Dr Shirleene Robinson, *Something like slavery? Queensland's Aboriginal child workers, 1842–1945*. Australian Scholarly Press, Melbourne, 2008.

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Analyse these photographs with a detective's eye and look for clues as to who these people are and what they are doing.

Suggest where they are and when it is. Is it a modern scene or set in a different time? What makes you think this?

Describe the clothing. What clues to the identities of the people can you discern from what they are wearing?

List all the objects you can see. What hints do they give you as to what is happening?

Imagine being one of the men or the woman and **describe** what you are doing and how you are feeling. Take it in turn to give a detective's report of your findings.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Write a story for the newspaper that reports the events portrayed in the photos.

Include a description of the place and the weather as well as the time of day and the date.

Name the people and give the reader some background information about their lives and their characters.

Create an image to go with your newspaper story.

Images

(top) Fiona FOLEY
The Oyster Fishermen #8 2011
Inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper
Dimensions: 85 x 103 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

(bottom) Fiona FOLEY
The Oyster Fishermen #11 2011
Inkjet print on Hahnemuhle paper
Dimensions: 85 x 103 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist, Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Look closely at this series of images and **analyse** how Foley has created a sense of narrative.

Imagine rearranging the sequence of images and **describe** the result.

Describe the qualities of the images that create a sense of drama and history.

Analyse the use of colour and **suggest** why the artist chose to print the photographs in sepia, with only the woman's dress in blue, rather than printing them in black and white or full colour.

Suggest why Foley uses herself in the photographs. Is it a self-portrait?

Suggest why she would choose to tell this story. Is it a well-known story?

Imagine these images are a storyboard for a television show and pitch the story to a network.

Start a story circle where students take it in turns to add a line of dialogue or a stage direction to the script.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

In groups, **research** a less well-known story of race relations during Australia's colonial period.

Use this story as the basis for a docu-drama and **create** a series of images to storyboard the narrative.

Consider characters, location, costume and props, scripting, directing, acting and staging.

Work as a team and **designate** different roles to achieve the final images.

Consider what the main point is that you want to emphasise and how to communicate this.



ROSELLA NAMOK

Cairns QLD



Rosella Namok, 2014 / Photography: Mick Richards

Every day when you jump in a boat and you go to this spot or that spot, then when you come back home, you yarn with family about these places. It makes you think about what you saw on the way to this reef or whatever. Like the little waves on milky water, saltwater mixed up with freshwater.

When I am doing a painting, I think about that day we went up the river or to a reef and crossed deep channels or big waves out there. I paint the stories from those days.

Rosella Namok
Cairns, 15 August 2013

Image

Rosella NAMOK
Sunset Rain 1 2014 (detail)
Acrylic on canvas
Dimensions: 110 x 228 cm
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks
Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards



For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Brainstorm a list of words to **describe** the mood of these paintings.

Are we looking at the sky, the land or the sea?

Suggest what time of day it is, or what season in the year.

Imagine the paintings are weather maps and give a weather report.

Describe the qualities of the painting that informed this report.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Torres Strait Islanders recognise 6 seasons in the year. **Find out** what they are.

Write a brief story about a particular sort of weather that you have observed or experienced, e.g. a storm, wind, rain, sunshine, hail, snow.

Think carefully about how to **describe** the full experience of the weather.

Swap your weather story with a classmate.

Make a painting or drawing based on your classmate's description.

Display the stories and pictures as a classroom mural.

Images

(top) Rosella NAMOK
Stinging Rain...in Yorkey Knob 2014
Acrylic on canvas
Dimensions: 110 x 228 cm
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards

(bottom) Rosella NAMOK
Sunset Rain 1 2014
Acrylic on canvas
Dimensions: 110 x 228 cm
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Compare and contrast these two paintings.

Discuss the impact of colour, scale and composition.

Imagine and **describe** a soundtrack for each of these paintings.

Scrutinise the paint application and the mark making. **Suggest** the tools and techniques used.

Brainstorm a list of words to describe the sights, sounds, smells, textures and tastes you associate with these works and **describe** the qualities of the paintings that evoke this.

Curator Virginia Rigney described Namok's work as 'immersive'. **Explain** what you think she means by this.

Break into groups and **debate** whether these works are abstract or representational.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Namok's paintings express an intimate experience with specific places over time.

Visit a particular outdoor place regularly over a number of weeks or draw on a connection you have to a place you know well.

Make sketches and take notes of your impressions, observations and memories.

Use these as the inspiration for a painting that evokes an experience of this place.

Experiment with mark making using different tools such as sticks, feathers, cotton wool or cardboard spatulas and with applying different qualities and thicknesses of paint.

Research and **compare** other abstractions based on experiences of landscape by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian artists e.g. Peter Sharp, Fred Williams, Arnhem Land bark painters.

Research the colour field painting movement and **compare** these artists' works (e.g. Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still) with Namok's.



MAVIS NGALLAMETTA

Aurukun QLD



Mavis Ngallametta, 2012 / Photography: Gina Allain

I live in Aurukun⁽¹⁾ in the community and it is a good place for me to stay. I used to weave all the time, but since 2008 I've been doing painting.

This painting is about this place, Ikalath. It is a nice place but it's not my place, but I have an adopted son and I have to ask him if it's alright for me to go there. So I can go out with my son and I can go out to get this special white (ochre) – just also like Europeans, you have to ask permission to go.

I am always thinking about painting, maybe from a dream or a memory of where I have been. I also make weaving from pandanus and ghost net⁽²⁾ – now I am never doing nothing.

First of all, there is the blue acrylic paint of the water. Then the painting is made from the country. That yellow is from Yalgamunken – I always go there to collect that yellow. It's the clay – you have to dig it from the ground, you lay it out till it is dry, then I take a special sifter to take the lumps out... so just like making a cake or bread. And after that, mix it up, then make a fire and when it is really hot I put that yellow so it cooks, and out of that yellow it turns red. I make the black charcoal from burning this special wood.

You see in the painting the oil drums. Now when you walk along the beach you find these things like old nets and rubbish that were not there before. You also see those red rocks, and under the water there are oyster beds. I think it is important to share the stories and to teach the young people.

Mavis Ngallametta

In conversation, Gold Coast City Gallery, July 2014, and Interview, Cairns, June 2014

Notes

- (1) Aurukun is located on the north-west coast of Cape York Peninsula.
- (2) 'Ghost nets' are long nets cast adrift by fishing vessels throughout Cape York and the Torres Strait, which catch marine life in their path, and are eventually deposited as piles of tangled rubbish onto the beaches.

Image

Mavis NGALLAMETTA *Ikalath #6* 2012

Ochres and charcoal with acrylic binder on stretched linen. Dimensions: 267 x 199 cm
The Corrigan Collection. Photography: Jenni Carter, courtesy Martin Browne Contemporary

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Imagine you are the artist and **mime** making this painting. Where did you make the first mark? What was the last mark you made? How long did it take you to make this painting?

List all the wildlife and man-made objects you can find in this painting and **count** the number of ducks.

Imagine being one of these ducks and **describe** this place from a duck's point of view.

Imagine diving into the water and **describe** the underwater scene.

Imagine a soundtrack. **Describe** the qualities of the painting that suggest these sounds.

Picture yourself hiding somewhere in this painting. Where do you hide and what can you see, hear and smell from your hiding place? **Describe** the weather, the vegetation and the surroundings.

As a group **start** a circle story based on your impressions of this place.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Ngallametta has made a painting of a place she knows very well. **Make** a memory drawing or painting of a place you know well.

Close your eyes and listen to an atmospheric soundtrack. Open your eyes and **make** a continuous line drawing.

Use this painting as a blueprint for a 3D sculpture.

Bend pipe cleaners to mimic the lines and join together to **make** forms. Work in groups to add individual forms together to **build** a large structure.

Images

(top) Cliffs of Ikalath, Gulf of Carpentaria
Photography: Kerry Trapnell

(bottom) Mavis NGALLAMETTA *Ikalath #6* (detail) 2012
Ochres and charcoal with acrylic binder on stretched linen
Dimensions: 267 x 199 cm. The Corrigan Collection
Photography: Jenni Carter, courtesy Martin Browne Contemporary

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

The artist Mavis Ngallametta lives at the meeting point of three great rivers.

Analyse how she has created a sense of fluidity and movement in her painting.

Suggest how the artist's proficiency as a weaver may have influenced her painting style.

Look closely at the paint. **Evaluate** how the areas of blue differ in quality from the other colours used.

Try making your own paints by grinding natural pigments such as charcoal, dry clay or earth and mixing these with water, wax, or egg yolk and water. **How** do these compare with commercially available paint products?

Analyse how the artist has created a sense of scale and **brainstorm** a list of words to describe the impact of this work.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Curator Virginia Rigney considers Ngallametta's work in relation to the tradition of grand history painting. **Discuss** what she means by this and **compare and contrast** with

- a painting by Caspar David Friedrich or Eugene von Guerard
- acrylic painting from the western desert and bark painting from Arnhem Land
- Japanese or Chinese vertical scroll painting

Analyse differences and similarities of motivation, technique, symbolism and meaning within the cultural context of their production.

Research the artist's process of making paints. Where has she sourced them?

Suggest why she would need permission to visit this place and collect these materials.

Compare with the processes for making dyes to use in her weaving practice.

Investigate the significance of ochre within Indigenous Australian culture.



LAURIE NILSEN

Brisbane QLD



I moved away from my country in western Queensland, where it is all freshwater, to Brisbane when I was sixteen; but just the love of fishing and the water for most people like me... it didn't take long to source out the water. It may be saltwater, but we are all mad keen fishermen – although I still don't like swimming in the saltwater because it's a bit foreign to me.

This trap is based on traditional fishing nets that you often see in the museums – the long tapered ones that are blocked off at one end. These traps that I make are all based on this concept of the funnels.

I've been using these traps as a vehicle to highlight different environmental and political issues over the past couple of years.

Being an avid fisherman, I see this rubbish floating in and out of the river all the time; and it's become a real problem in some of the places out in the Pacific where hundreds of tons of plastic are floating around and breaking down, and forming a type of silt down on the bottom. And it's killing a lot of the wildlife, these plastics – dolphins and turtles – so there is a lot this poisonous stuff floating around and may look harmless, but when you get hundreds and hundreds of tons, it does a lot of damage.



Laurie Nilsen, 2014
Photography: Mick Richards

Image

Laurie NILSEN
Once were fishermen 2014 (detail)
Mixed media installation and video projection
Dimensions: 60 x 230 x 51 cm
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards



Image

Laurie NILSEN
Once were fishermen 2014 (detail)
Mixed media installation and video projection
Dimensions: 75 x 119 x 75 cm
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Compare and contrast the two fish traps.

List and count all the objects that have been caught inside Nilssen's fish traps. What would you normally expect to find caught in these traps? How did these objects get here?

Describe what materials Nilssen has used to make his fish traps. Why do you think he chose these materials to work with? What would these traps have been made from historically?

List some other places you may see barbed wire and **brainstorm** some associations with this material. Would it have been easy to work with? How does it contribute to a certain perception of the work?

Identify the material used to make the fish and **suggest** what Nilssen is highlighting about consumer relationships with sea food.

Watch the video and **describe** what you see. **Comment** on the combination of video and sculptural elements.

Imagine you are a reporter for a local news program and give an on-the-spot report about the state of the waterways based on Nilssen's fish traps. **Interview** others in the group for their response to the pollution.

For Juniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Define the word pollution and **list** as many different sorts as you can. What sorts of pollutants are there? Where do they come from and what is their impact on the environment?

Research on the internet the journey of a plastic bottle from production through consumption to disposal.

Investigate the impact of plastic waste on marine and bird life and share your findings with the class.

Make a series of fish and birds from recycled plastic bottles and other plastic waste. **Combine** to create a class mobile that tells the story of the impact of plastic waste on creatures who depend on the waterways for their existence.

Consider what you may put inside their bottle stomachs as well as what you may hang around them.

Use felt markers to write or draw on the bottles as necessary to tell this story of pollution.

For Seniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Nilssen says 'I've been using these traps as a vehicle to highlight different environmental and political issues over the past couple of years'. **Discuss** as a class the issues Nilssen is highlighting.

Brainstorm and **list** other ecological and environmental issues of contemporary concern.

Choose an environmental issue of particular concern to you. **Research** in depth and use as the basis to develop an artwork or series of artworks that highlights this issue.

Consider what materials and media to use and how to communicate your findings and message effectively.

Investigate other artists who comment on environmental and ecological issues and **analyse** how they have communicated their concerns.

NAPOLEAN OUI

Cairns QLD



Napolean Oui, 2014
Photography: Jo-Anne Driessens

I am a rainforest man of the Tjapukai tribe, and I made these paintings of fish traps for *Saltwater Country*. I'd seen it when I was little; they used to make fish traps out of stone at the ocean and when I was young, my cousin and I had a go at making one. So they used to make stone dams and they would build the rocks up and, while the women went into the mangroves to look for shellfish, the men would wait for the tide to go out and the men would stand in the water with spears and they would see if there were any fish caught in the traps – that's what my painting is all about.

The women would make this bark cloth from a certain tree – stringybark tree – soak it and pound it. What I'm trying to do in the 2000s is to take that traditional design but to make it contemporary.

Through art I explore my connection to the rainforest and my culture in an authentic rainforest style. The paintings evoke the essence of the almost abstract art found on the ancient traditional rainforest shields. These are the largest found in Australia and traditionally provided a wonderful 'canvas' for this unique art form.

The art incorporates bold stylised designs and strong ochre colours highlighted by black outlines, creating a style that is truly unique – found only in the rainforest region of far north Queensland and is unlike any other Aboriginal art. It is these designs that inspire my contemporary interpretation onto bark cloth and canvas.

A father will make his son a shield and the father will sit up one end and the son will sit up the other end. Whatever the father would paint on his side, the son would paint the same on the other side. But the son will add something. It is like a father-and-son diary and he will cherish that shield for his life. Only certain men knew how to make shields and paint them, not everybody could do it.

Napolean Oui
Cairns, 15 August 2013, and Artist statement

Image

Napolean OUI *Shield Design* 2014 (detail)
Oilstick on bark cloth
Dimensions: 195 x 78 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist and
Mossenson Galleries, Perth



Images

(left to right)
 Napoleon OUI
Fish Trap 2014
 Oilstick on bark cloth
 Dimensions: 195 x 78 cm (framed)
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Mossenson Galleries, Perth

Napoleon OUI
Guyu Muyal 2014
 Oilstick on bark cloth
 Dimensions: 195 x 78 cm (framed)
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Mossenson Galleries, Perth

Napoleon OUI
Rainforest, Saltwater 2014
 Oilstick on bark cloth
 Dimensions: 195 x 78 cm (framed)
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Mossenson Galleries, Perth

Napoleon OUI
Shield Design 2014
 Oilstick on bark cloth
 Dimensions: 195 x 78 cm (framed)
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Mossenson Galleries, Perth



For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Examine these four images and play 'Spot the Difference'.

Identify the stone walls, areas of water and sandbars.

Look for and **count** all the fish. Which trap has caught the most?

Suggest what the patterned shape in the centre might represent.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Look through books and on the internet for photos of animals and insects. **Choose** an animal, insect or natural object that most appeals to you. **Examine** it closely and make a number of detailed drawings including the distinguishing patterns, textures and shapes. **Use** these drawings as inspiration for a bold geometric design using no more than 3 colours plus black and white.

Consider repetition and symmetry.

Develop a screen-print for a t-shirt.

For Seniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research rainforest shields on the internet and in books.

Investigate what the shields are made from, how they were made and how they were used.

Analyse the significance of the designs on their surfaces. Are they just patterns?

Discuss the relationship of the design to individual and cultural identity.

Compare and contrast OUI's shield designs with historical examples and **discuss** how he has been inspired by them.

Stage a class **debate**: Is OUI's art traditional or contemporary?

As part of the debate define the term 'traditional'. **Consider**: Are traditions static or dynamic?

RYAN PRESLEY

Brisbane QLD



Image

Ryan PRESLEY *Maneater* 2012
Silk-cut linoleum print on Magnani paper
Dimensions: 55 x 52 cm (framed)
Courtesy of the artist. Photography: Mick Richards

This piece plays upon the 'good cop/bad cop' cliché that has contributed so much to our enjoyment of certain films and television shows. It is a joy to be able to consume gore and violence without an accompanying sense of shame, in the knowledge that we do not always savour what we know inside to be right, or even OK.

The grand narrative of carnage and abuse being a virtue when exercised towards the greater good in the name of justice, elates us and overpowers our wordless and baser aversions towards the unapologetic use of violence and domination upon fellow people. This grand narrative, although it encourages worthy ideals, can have the effect of hindering our ability to navigate moral responsibility and develop a capacity for empathy in our daily lives. For the incidents of reality are complex and painful; they are not subject to the blunt and comforting moral generalisations of our grand narratives.

Which shark is 'good cop' and which shark is 'bad cop'? Is 'good cop' swallowing 'bad cop' or is 'bad cop' overwhelming 'good cop'? As much as the concept of dedicated citizens performing a constant vigil against injustice towards others in their society is well-meaning and commendable, any such high ideal is too blunt and ingrained with self-vindication. It protects the 'protectors of justice' from the scrutiny of justice. We must not be afraid to scrutinise 'good cop'; we must not be afraid to look into their wholesome, clear-cut face and discover that the hero has been lost. Over-confident faith in a flawed system creates a safe haven for precedent and continuation of injustice.

Ryan Presley
Artist statement, 2014



Ryan Presley, 2014
Photography: Michael Aird

I like to work with woodblocks because of the long history of woodblocks being used for religious artwork. It was used to promote Christian ideals as it was one of the first print-making techniques.

I like icon artworks because of the bold imagery and the power of the epic and very emotively constructed images about power relations; and the colour schemes are very striking. Christianity melds with different themes and takes on different traits when looking at the Australian context and how it has been used in different ways over the years.

Ryan Presley
South Brisbane, 14 November 2013

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Count the number of sharks in Presley's work *Maneater*.

Count the number of teeth in Presley's work *Good Co-op, Bad Cop*. **Find** the fishing line and describe the hook. Is it an ordinary fishing hook? **Locate** and **describe** the shark's eye. Is it an ordinary shark's eye? **Find** other references to police and police work. **Describe** the surface of the water and **analyse** how the artist has created a sense of movement. Is this somewhere you would like to go for a swim? Why or why not? **Follow** the chain with your eyes. How long do you think it is? Where is the beginning? Where is the end?

Brainstorm the sorts of characteristics attributed to sharks. Are they the sorts of animals you might have as a pet. Why or why not? Discuss why Presley has chosen to use a shark as the subject in this artwork. What is he suggesting about his relationship to or perception of the police force?

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

In his artwork Presley has used an animal to communicate something about human characteristics. This is known as anthropomorphism. **Research** the meaning of the word anthropomorphism.

Brainstorm some other anthropomorphic descriptions such as 'sly as a fox', 'gentle as a lamb', 'quiet as a mouse', 'slippery as a fish', 'strong as an ox', 'stubborn as a mule' and **discuss** their usage in contemporary language. **Describe** what is meant if someone is referred to as 'catty' or 'pig-headed'.

Choose an animal to use as inspiration to make an artwork that explores the idea of anthropomorphism.

Collect images and information about the animal and **consider** what qualities or associations you will emphasise in your artwork and how to convey this.

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Identify the media used to create the work *Good Co-op, Bad Cop* and **describe** the tools, techniques and processes involved. **Discuss** the meaning of the word 'graphic' in relation to this work. **Consider** it as a noun, an adjective and an adverb.

Brainstorm some other words to communicate the qualities of this work. **Imagine** this image in full colour or as a watercolour and **assess** how this would change its impact.

Analyse the composition. **Identify** the dominant shapes and the relationship between negative and positive space, image and text, repetition and patterning.

Symbolism is the communication of ideas and emotions by indirect association. **Evaluate** Presley's use of symbolism in this work and **describe** your emotional response to the work.

Suggest why there is a shark inside a shark and how this may relate to the theme of 'good cop/bad cop'.

Take it in turns to **role play** the artist and answer questions from the group about your motivation for making this work and the message behind it.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Recount the events of 2004 following the death of Mulrunji Doomadgee in police custody on Palm Island. Presley has cited this incident as the impetus for this work which he describes as a 'grand narrative' that questions the relationship between good and bad, the powerful and the powerless. **Research** the relationship between printmaking and politics in the history of Australian art.

Investigate the prints of Kevin Gilbert, Noel Counihan, Chips Mackinolty and Therese Ritchie and posters produced by collectives such as Tin Sheds.

Discuss the issues they are highlighting in their works and **suggest** why they were drawn to this medium.

Create a screen print or lino cut that takes a political controversy, a story of social justice or a cautionary tale related to race relations in this country as its subject, e.g. stolen generation, reconciliation, land claims.

Think carefully about how to communicate your message with clarity and impact. **Consider** the use of symbolism, relationship between image and text, bold design and composition.



Image

Ryan PRESLEY
Good Co-op, Bad Cop 2011
 Silk-cut linoleum print on
 Magnani paper
 Dimensions: 105 x 76 cm (framed)
 Courtesy of the artist
 Photography: Mick Richards

BRIAN ROBINSON

Cairns QLD



I have Indigenous cultural heritage that stems back through many ancestral generations from two regions in Australia – one to the western islands of the Torres Strait, to Moa (Banks Island) the Maluyligal [people on the passageway], and the other to the eastern side of Cape York Peninsula⁽¹⁾ to a place known as Shelburne Bay [white sand country] where the Wuthathi people have resided for thousands of years. I also have Asian heritage that goes back to Malaysian Borneo to the Dayak people and also to the Philippines to the Villaflor family [Villaflor translates as 'Village of the Flowers'].

The Torres Strait is a thin narrow strait squeezed between PNG (Papua New Guinea) and the tip of Australia. The width is about 130 by about 150 kms across, so quite a narrow little waterway. So there is a lot of water that runs through that particular area, and that water itself is not just there to carry seafood – it's one of the main connections to all TI (Torres Strait Islander) people to everyone globally. So the waters themselves don't just

carry seafood and nutrition, but also carry a lot of cultural connections back to the islands themselves.



Being on the wharf was a big part of my growing up on Thursday Island. In the *Woven Waters* work there are these two figures sitting on the wharf, and while it looks as though they are fishing, they could also be contemplating life or other possibilities, so it is really up to the viewer what they see these figures actually doing.

Brian Robinson, 2014
Photography: Mick Richards

The etching *August 23 1898* looks at a lot of cultural material that was taken from the Torres Strait back to be housed in institutions in Europe. That collection of objects collected by Haddon⁽²⁾ went back to Cambridge. For me, there has always been a strong interest in the history of my people – pulling apart the history of the Torres Strait and seeing how it fits nationally and internationally.

Brian Robinson
Cairns, July 2014

Notes

- (1) Cape York Peninsula is located at the northern tip of Queensland.
- (2) Anthropologist and ethnologist A.C. Haddon headed an expedition from Cambridge University, UK, to the Torres Strait Islands in 1898.

Image

Brian ROBINSON *August 23 1898* – *Today I collected with much zeal, through the barter and exchange of gifts, ancient artefacts belonging to a race of Indigenous Australians known as Torres Strait Islanders. Wooden masks, pearl shell pendants, smoking pipes, dance objects, and a strange device called a USB flash drive, were among the items obtained. A.C. Haddon 2012 (detail). Etching printed in three colours from one plate. Edition of 10, on Hahnemuhle paper. Editioning printers: Elizabeth Hunter. Published by Djumbunji Press KickArts Fine Arts Printmaking. Dimensions: 93 x 131 cm (framed). Collection Gold Coast City Gallery. Photography: Mick Richards*



For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Locate the two figures and **suggest** where they are and what they are doing.

Find and **describe** the fishing equipment and the wharves.

Look for shapes and patterns that repeat and discuss the effect this creates.

Identify currents in the air and the sea and describe the weather and the view from the wharf.

In pairs, **role play** a conversation between the two figures.

Imagine being the artist and describe how you made the work.

Identify the different layers and **suggest** how they were put together. **Discuss**: Is this a sculpture or a painting?

Image

Brian ROBINSON *Woven Waters* 2014. Sculptural relief wall work: palight plastic, timber [dowel], enamel spray paint, raffia, feathers, shells and metal ornament. Dimensions: (Panel A) 175 x 145 x 25 cm (Panel B) 123 x 245 x 30cm. Courtesy of the artist, Mossenson Galleries, Perth WA and Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney. Collection Gold Coast City Gallery. Photography: Mick Richards

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Write a short fishing story inspired by this work or recount a fishing tale of your own experience.

Describe the natural surroundings and the weather as well as the activity of fishing.

Experiment with creating patterns to represent ripples and waves in the ocean, the movement of clouds and wind in the sky and the forms of leaves and flowers.

Cut shapes from thick coloured card, **decorate** some with patterns and use to **create** a luscious layered fishing picture.

For Seniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Robinson has communicated a personal story about fishing.

Investigate the importance of fishing and the sea to Torres Strait Islanders.

Find out about the epic stories of warriors and heroes such as Kulam, Waikimab and Amipurur and share your findings with the class.

Discuss the connection between everyday stories and cultural myths and legends that are told and re-told.

Research myths and legends about the sea from other cultures and **choose** one as an inspiration for an artwork.

Discuss Robinson's possible reasons for using a long title for his etching '*August 23 1898...*'. **Identify** and discuss contemporary references in the title and artwork.

Research anthropologist and ethnologist A.C. Haddon.

KEN THAIDAY SNR.

Cairns QLD



Ken Thaiday Snr, 2014
Photography: Michael Aird



Image

Ken THAIDAY
Frigat Bird with Darnley Island (Erub) 2014
Head dress: black painted timber on metal head piece, nylon thread, elastic
Dimensions: 52 x 89 x 40 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photography: Mick Richards

This project is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body

This artwork tells about the olden days and they are going to row this boat. It is all about the sea, before time. The boat used to come to Torres Strait; we would carry cargo on our shoulder, from the saltwater, the rock wharf. Then we had to pick up everything before the tide comes in. If you don't have people to pick up the cargo, then everything gets wet.

We had a boat like this, take the cargo in, then row back and pick up some more. All about the sea and nothing about the land.

I can tell a story about what I do, but nothing else.

My work is all about fishing. If you look at my artwork, it is all about fishing. I love fishing. Even in Cairns, I fish all the time here too. I know how to catch fish. I had to shift my dinghy; I keep it at my brother-in-law's place 'cause if I touch that dinghy I would never do artwork. If I got a dinghy in my backyard, you would not see me here, the artwork would stay and I would be on the saltwater.

I went to museums all around America. They showed me all around Washington DC. All the museums, they are huge. I have to make myself strong when looking at artefacts like that. It is better they stay and they look after them. I am happy for that. I say if somebody brought this here to be looked after, then it should stay here. Nothing spoiled with these things. The rope is very old; I suppose if you touched and tried to bend it, it would snap. So I wear gloves and I just pick it up and put it back down. I saw a very old bow and arrow, old spears and everything. I went into this room to look around and I said, wow, look at all these artefacts, been there for years – many, many years. I am thinking way back when I see that old artwork. The different ways they did it, the different materials. I can do it now with different material that looks exactly the same as they had then.

I like to work with bamboo. I love bamboo, 'cause I know what to do. I can bend, I can cut and I can clean it. If you don't know how to work with bamboo, don't work with bamboo, 'cause you are going to end having to buy ten packets of Band-Aids. You need to watch the edge of the bamboo when you split it. If you slip, it will cut your fingers. You have to hold it tight. If your knife is not sharp, you will drag the bamboo. The bamboo has sharp edges, both sides.

Ken Thaiday
Cairns, 19 March 2013

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

List the animals and plants represented in these sculptures.

Identify and **describe** the materials used and **suggest** where they may have been sourced.

Imagine being the artist and **detail** the process of making these works.

Examine each sculpture carefully, **count** the different number of parts and take note of the systems of ropes and levers.

Imagine them moving and **mimic** the actions.

Describe how the artist expressed his love of the ocean and life in the Torres Strait Islands as well as his cultural heritage through these works.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research the plants, birds and fish of the Torres Strait Islands. **Choose** one as the inspiration for an artwork with moveable parts. **Cut** shapes out of strong cardboard and **articulate** with push pins, strings and levers.

Image

Ken THAIDAY
Frigat Bird with Sunrise/Sunset 2014
Painted timber, nylon thread, wire
28 x 50 x 28 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photography: Mick Richards

This project is assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Research Thaiday's artistic practice in magazines, catalogues and on the internet and **collect** images and articles to share with the class.

Find out about his life including his childhood growing up on Erub (Darnley Island), his work for Queensland Railways as a young man and his involvement with Torres Strait Islander dance groups as well as the Coming of the Light ceremony.

Analyse the significance of family, faith and culture to his practice.

Investigate the significance of the animals he depicts in his sculptural work. Why does he choose to represent the beizam (shark) and the frigate bird in particular?

Thaiday describes his dance machines as 'mobilised artefacts'. What do you think he means by this?

Explore the intersection of traditional lore with contemporary life and **consider** if objects used in traditional ceremonial dance are different to sculptures made for exhibition in a gallery.

Discuss how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists might learn from artefacts held in museums and historic collections?

Create a class timeline based on this research and discussion that **maps** Thaiday's life and career through a chronological display of images. Work in groups to **write** a series of text panels to go with the timeline. **Consider** how his work has evolved over time and what have been the major influences on this development.



ALICK TIPOTI

Cairns QLD



Image

Alick TIPOTI *Kulba Wakay (ancient voice – songs and chants to acknowledge the spiritual ancestors)* 2014 (detail)

Video performance art work featuring sculptures made by the artist
Courtesy of the artist. Photography: Mick Richards



Alick Tipoti, 2014 / Photography: Mick Richards

Personally I really connect with the whole theme of 'saltwater country' because I am a person of the saltwater. It's different when I am swimming in the lake or creek in the freshwater; it's different from the sea because we believe that is our medicine, that it is our supermarket, that's who we are. So all my works are all connected in many ways to the sea – it's basically all about the sea.

My understanding of sacred is that there are sacred performances and actions only for men at sacred places. To me the masks that I make, they are almost like flirting with sacred, but they are not sacred – simply because they are fibreglass; they are not made out of turtle-shell. The masks that are in the museums, they are sacred because they have been touched by sacred hands. I am not a sacred person. I revive those songs, but I don't expose the deeper stuff.

Every time I go to Sydney I visit Professor Jeremy Beckett. He did field work in the Torres Strait in the late '50s and early 1960s. We actually use some of the chants that he recorded from Badu Island and I just choreographed the introductions. I compose and choreograph my own songs and I know ancient ones from my Dad. They are the exact songs that Jeremy recorded. Dad was born around 1935, so Jeremy was recording songs from Dad's uncles in the late '50s. I got obsessed with ancient songs a long time ago. So the aim of my dancing is to revive those ancient songs.

It is not just about dancing for the sake of dancing. It is not just because it is an ancient culture that I want to share. I don't know if I want to share that much. Not because it is sacred, but because it is my culture. But then again, people would like to see this, so you share some of your culture and practices. It is very protocol based. No women or children to touch the mask or get involved in singing. I always flag things with elders back home.

Alick Tipoti
Cairns, 2014

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Watch these videos carefully then turn away and **list** everything you can remember.

Describe the different sounds that you can hear and **suggest** how they have been generated.

Now watch again and **find** the drum (warup), the headdress (dhari), the mask and the conch shell and **describe** all the other props and costumes in detail.

Suggest what materials they are made out of and how they were made.

Make a sketch of the performer and **write** a sentence that describes the performance.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research Torres Strait Islander dance.

Look on the internet for videos of different performances.

Find out all about the different instruments, headdresses, masks, body adornments, costumes and songs.

Investigate what stories and cultural perspectives are being shared through these dances.

Research other forms of cultural dance, e.g. from Indonesia, India, New Zealand and Japan and explore the stories and world views they communicate.

In groups, **choreograph** a short dance that tells a story of your own devising.

Design and **fabricate** some props and costumes to go with your dance and **perform** for the class.

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Brainstorm a list of words to describe the experience of viewing this video. How would the experience differ if it was displayed on a small monitor?

Describe the different instruments, objects, and costuming and **detail** the materials and techniques used to create them.

Compare the performance of the dancer masked and unmasked and **describe** the difference in the way you perceive the human presence.

Consider: Is the video or the performance the artwork? Is this traditional dance or performance art?

Imagine being the artist and describe the process of creating this work. **Discuss** the relationship of costume, movement, lighting, sound, staging and text.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Tipoti is well known for his large-scale lino prints depicting Torres Strait Islander stories. Tasmanian printmaker Jan Hogan says Tipoti 'develops the language of the lino cut to the scale of a performance'.

Research Tipoti's printmaking and explore the relationship between his printmaking and his performance work.

Consider the subject matter as well as the scale. **Analyse** the qualities of the prints that contribute to a sense of theatricality.



Image

Alick TIPOTI
Kulba Wakay (ancient voice – songs and chants to acknowledge the spiritual ancestors) 2014 (detail)
Video performance art work featuring sculptures made by the artist
Courtesy of the artist. Photography: Mick Richards

IAN WALDRON

Yungaburra QLD



Ian Waldron
Photography: Michael Aird

Image

Ian WALDRON
The Norman River, Kurtjar Country
(Gulf of Carpentaria) 2014 (detail)
Acrylic and oil on canvas board
Dimensions: 100 x 240 cm
Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards

This painting is about Kurtjar country in the far north of Queensland, and our country runs from the Normanton River up to the Stanton River, and there are about a million acres of land there that is our country known as Delta Downs.

At the top of the painting you see the blue coming into the land, but there is no coastline as such because the land is so flat. There are no mountains in our country – the water melds right into the land across big massive



plains and mudflats that flood in the wet season, and so the water comes in quite a way.

It is my mother's family country, and the words in the painting describe the places and things found there. I do not speak the language but I think it is very important to know of these things. This language gives me a greater feeling for the country and what's been happening there. My clan totem is the bloodwood tree... it is hard timber with a sap that seeps out like blood, and it grows all

over our country from the mudflats on the coast to the savannah lands.

I am in two places – because fishing and going out in the boat and all that has been, and still is, a major part of my life. I still do it as much as I can... fishing and hunting food. Then I go back to the cattle country and that is my country too.

Ian Waldron
Yungaburra, 18 March 2013

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Imagine being in a boat journeying along this river. How far do you go and how long does it take?

Jump off the boat and go for a swim or a barefoot walk. **Describe** the feeling of the water and the qualities of the land. Is it muddy, rocky or sandy? **Detail** the qualities of the painting that lead you to this conclusion.

Identify where the water, sky and land meet. **Discuss** the significance of the horizon line in the landscape. **Picture** this river in flood and **describe** the scene.

Take it in turns to **read** the words out aloud. **Suggest** what they may refer to and why the artist has included them.

Find the bloodwood tree. **Suggest** why the artist chose to include this tree in particular.

Analyse how Waldron has created a sense of expanse, both physical space and distance through time.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Define what landscape means to you.

Locate and **trace** a major river system on a map of Australia.

Identify the different parts of a river system including the source, river mouths, deltas and tributaries.

Investigate the different relationships of humans to rivers as a source of food and water, for transport and leisure activities and as borders and boundaries.

Locate the river system closest to your school. **Identify** its source, where it travels to and what sort of country it travels through. **Research** the history of the river's usage over time and the Indigenous name for this river and the country through which it travels.

As a class, **make** a series of small paintings that tells the story of this river and join to create a classroom mural.

For Seniors

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Waldron has painted his mother's country.

Investigate what the word 'country' means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Consider: Is country the same as landscape? Why or why not?

Investigate the significance of totems, clans and language groups. How do they connect people and place?

Locate Normanton River and Stanton River on a map of Queensland.

Investigate the landforms, weather patterns, flora and fauna of the Gulf of Carpentaria region.

Research the Indigenous and non-Indigenous histories of the area including the arrival of missionaries and the history of pastoralism, the Kurtjar Aboriginal Corporation and the establishment of Delta Downs, along with the objects and artefacts from pre-contact as well as contemporary times.

Use this research as a basis to **create** a series of 30 x 30cm artworks on stiff card or plywood board.

Combine image and text and include photographs, drawings/paintings and collage.

Join all the small artworks together to create a large collaborative class work that reflects the different histories, cultures and environments of the Gulf of Carpentaria region.

Image

Ian WALDRON
The Norman River, Kurtjar Country
 (Gulf of Carpentaria) 2014 (details)
 Acrylic and oil on canvas board
 Dimensions: 100 x 240 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery, Brisbane
 Photography: Mick Richards



JUDY WATSON

Brisbane QLD



Judy Watson, 2014 / Photography: Alex Chomicz

I am interested in the overlap of histories, in the same way that it is freshwater in my grandmother's country in north-west Queensland and it is saltwater where my dad's family grew up. This has influenced my life growing up within Australia.

So I am interested in the north-west Queensland gulf country, where my mother's family is from, through to Burrum Heads where my dad's family is from and the saltwater connections there.

Judy Watson

South Stradbroke Island, 20 March 2014

I use my canvas as a memory skin. Many times I have sat on them, used them as tarps, eaten off them. I like to take them to sites and push materials from that site into the canvas... imprint them with the body of what is around me. I often work with a pool of water then allow the material to seep into and gradually filter out into water. I am always aware that when it dries it illuminates the space within. It is really important to me to leave space within the work for it to breathe, space for it to shimmer and flicker against the pigment.

I was interested in the Matthew Flinders' expedition and how it touches on places from the gulf through to the east coast. I was interested in following his boat from Blue Mud Bay in Arnhem Land around to the Queensland coast.

I am always interested in that leakage or that transportation of materials that you see along tide lines.

The stingray holes, that sort of thing, those sorts of forms; it is what is left behind that is important to me.

Judy Watson

South Stradbroke Island, 20 March 2014

These are objects I have picked up from the intertidal zone along the east coast. One of the shells is a freshwater mussel shell. A number of these were washed out from a creek in behind the beach at Burrum Heads. I associate them with Mum and our Aboriginal family. They are known as Malamu or water beef, in Waanyi (running water people) country in north-west Queensland. Middens of them are in our country, and are seen as women's sites too in some places.

The decapitated turtle head was found at Burrum Heads⁽¹⁾ and is possibly the result of a boat strike. The kelp root I picked up at Brunswick Heads⁽²⁾. This area is on the Flinders' map, in the *blue float* work on canvas.

The objects have been cast in bronze and placed on the lit transparent shelf that could be seen as the edge of the sea, between sky and water. The intertidal zone is contentious and has been the site of two important victories for Indigenous people in Australia, with native

title and sea rights given to Yolngu people at Blue Mud Bay and to people in the Torres Strait Islands.

The cast bronze objects on the shelf also comment on the passage of boats in these waters. Previous works that I have made also reference the oil spills along the coast where boats have lost oil and chemicals which have been deposited in our waters and along our beaches, endangering marine and bird life, and threatening the freshwater lens and rivers and creeks – our precious, fragile jewels that are the underlying bodies of freshwater that support the environment in these places.

Judy Watson

24 November 2014

Notes

- (1) Burrum Heads is a coastal town approximately 300 kms north of Brisbane, Queensland.
- (2) Brunswick Heads is a town on the north coast of New South Wales.

Image

Judy WATSON, *flinders chart, cottonwood leaves*, 2014.

Ink on copper shim: group of five elements. Dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Assisted by David Jones and Carolyn Craig. Photography: Murray Waite



For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Imagine you are an archaeologist who has uncovered these sets of objects. Break into teams to **examine** them carefully and **discuss** your findings. Are they animals, plants or man-made objects? Are they whole objects or fragments of larger things? **Suggest** where they were found? Does the map give any clues?

Role play a press conference about the find and answer questions from the media. Take it in turns to be the team of experts and the group of journalists.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Visit the local park, river, beach or bush and **explore** the area thoroughly.

Investigate how the place is used and by whom. **Identify** traces of activity from both animals and humans.

Observe what has been washed up, left behind or discarded.

Make sketches, take rubbings, collect objects and mementos both natural and man-made.

Use this material to create an artwork that tells a story about the interaction of animals and humans with this particular environment.

Think carefully about how to display your collection of objects and images.

Experiment with sand casting by making depressions in wet sand and filling with plaster of Paris. Accompany your display with a museum label that tells the story of these objects.

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Imagine you are a forensic scientist and look for clues as to the origins and history of these objects.

Look carefully at the surfaces and **describe** the patina.

Discuss Watson's choice of materials and describe the process used to create these works.

Consider: Are they originals or copies?

Analyse how Watson has communicated a sense of fragility and gravity.

Imagine that these objects were painted in bright colours. How would this affect your response to them?

Analyse the way in which the objects have been installed. How does this contribute to a particular reading?

Evaluate the objects in relation to the painting.

Watson refers to her painting as 'memory skin'. **Suggest** what she means by this.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Research the plight of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna that visit or inhabit coastal areas, including the turtle, sea kelp and giant whelk that Watson references in her work.

Investigate what threatens their habitats and their life expectancy.

Create a class display of extinct or endangered creatures and plants that includes 2D and 3D exhibits.

Make detailed drawings as well as models out of clay or plasticine. You may like to **experiment** with sand casting by making depressions in wet sand and filling with plaster of Paris.

Accompany your display with a museum label that tells the story of these objects.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Watson is interested in the layered histories of place, both personal and cultural. **Describe** the layers of experience, memory and research that she incorporates in her artwork for *Saltwater Country*.

Create an artwork titled 'Memory Skin' or 'Layered Histories' that combines personal, cultural and historical information and impressions about a particular place of significance to you.



Images

Judy WATSON, *dead littoral*, 2014 (details)
Cast bronze installation: group of ten elements
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane. Casting by UAP and Perides Art Foundry. Acknowledgements: Jerko Starcevic, Mary Stuart
Photography: Murray Waite

VERNON AH KEE

Brisbane QLD

I have done work around the beach, trying to think of the psychology of the beach and in the context of Australia. The psychology of what it is to be Australian is very much about the beach. Wherever you are in Australia, everybody knows how far they are from the coast. Even people from the central deserts, who have not seen saltwater, know how far from the coast they are. I think it is part of the Australian psyche. I find it really interesting that everybody thinks of themselves in relation to their proximity to the coast, to the beach. So in that way, we are all saltwater people.



Vernon Ah Kee, 2014 / Photography: Michael Aird

cantchant⁽¹⁾ is a critique of beach culture and beach psychology and how that informs Australian national culture. It also critiques the so-called 'riot, clash or uprising' on Palm Island in 2004. And it critiques the Cronulla riot (2005) as well.⁽²⁾

When you live in Brisbane, it is in close proximity to the coast – Coolangatta, Kirra and Surfers Paradise. When I made the *cantchant* project in 2007, I wanted to utilise these ideal locations. When I say 'ideal', in the psyche of what we think about as the beach and surfing and surf

culture, these are classic beaches – talking about Main Beach, Kirra, Duranbah and Coolangatta. These are the beaches that when you look at surf brochures of people dressed up in surf gear, that's where they take the photos. You go down there and those beaches are beautiful. They are amazing really. I come from north Queensland and I'd seen beaches like that on TV and in advertising, but I had never actually walked on them. I thought they were amazing, and no wonder whitefellas want to own them.

The two artworks for *Saltwater Country* are large-format portraits of my son Gavin, directly referencing the Tindale⁽³⁾ images of my grandfather and great-grandparents. One is forward looking and the other is a profile; talking about the same things that my other Tindale portraits have referenced – archival photography, museology, inaccurate representations of Aboriginal people through science, through anthropology – instead of how people would want to see themselves in contemporary society.

A lot of what I do is about my family. I usually stick to themes and issues that still inform the ways that my family is affected and the way my family think about themselves and think about their histories. Our histories are very much disparate now, but we are still very much informed by the history of our family and the way this country has treated us historically.



I think of my family as rainforest people, but the rainforest where I am from is literally the coast. I don't actually think of myself as a saltwater person, but I could not imagine myself living far away from the coast.

My mother's mother, my grandmother, was Kuku-Yalandji and Koko-Berrin; my mother's father, my grandfather, was Waanji. Koko-Berrin is west Cape York; Kuku-Yalanji is east Cape, rainforest, on the coast; and Waanji is dry country, west Queensland. My father was Yidindji and Gugu Yimithirr, on the coast and very much Rainforest. So while I don't specifically identify myself as Freshwater, I do identify as Rainforest, coast Rainforest.

The idea is to present a stripped-down version of what Aboriginal people are. Stripping away the romantic and the ideal and the noble savage idea of blackfellas. That is what I am wanting to do. I have been doing these portraits for a while, but what is consistent is the gaze that I want to capture. That will always be a feature of these portraits.

Vernon Ah Kee
Brisbane, 7 May 2014

Notes

- (1) Two works in the exhibition, *wegrewhere #2* and *wegrewhere #3*, are from Vernon Ah Kee's *cantchant* project.
- (2) Palm Island is just north of Townsville, off the Queensland coast. Cronulla is a beachside suburb in southern Sydney, New South Wales.
- (3) Dr Norman Tindale, in his role as anthropologist with the South Australian Museum, recorded these images during extensive field trips throughout Australia from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Image

Vernon AH KEE *wegrewhere #3* 2009
Digital print on Fujiflex. Dimensions: 89 x 127 cm (framed). Collection Gold Coast City Gallery

For Juniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Imagine being the artist and **describe** the process of making these drawings. Where did you make the first mark? Where did you make the last? How long did it take you?

Describe the expression on this boy's face. Look into his eyes and **suggest** what he may be thinking and feeling.

Brainstorm a list of words to describe the mood of these drawings and to describe the quality of the mark making.

These larger-than-life drawings are portraits of the artist's son Gavin based on photographs.

As a family portrait how does it differ from a snapshot in a wallet or a photo album?

Discuss the difference between photography and drawing and **suggest** why the artist would want to make a drawing of a photo.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Find out about the anthropologist Norman Tindale and the photographs he took in the 1920s to the 1950s. What is an anthropologist and what does he/she do? Why did Tindale photograph Aboriginal people?

Why would Ah Kee be interested in these photographs? How do they compare to your family photos?

Vernon Ah Kee has said of his large-scale drawings 'I always start with the eyes. The eyes carry most of the detail'. Practise communicating just with your eyes to express different emotions such as sorrow, defiance, surprise, disbelief, fear, joy...

Working in pairs, take a series of portrait photos of each other. **Experiment** with formal and informal poses and **compare and contrast** the effect of this.

Select one photograph that you feel most represents you and enlarge it as a starting point for a drawing that depicts only your eyes. Include as much detail and expression as you can in this self-portrait.

Locate old family photographs of your grandparents or great-grandparents. What do these photos communicate about your heritage and your identity?

Choose one photo that you feel a particular connection with to digitise. **Enlarge** the eyes of one of the family members depicted and make a drawing. **Mount** a class display of family eyes.

For Seniors

LOOKING AND DISCUSSING

Compare the artworks in the exhibition by Vernon Ah Kee and **list** similarities and differences of media, scale and mood.

Analyse the visual language and describe how the experience and meaning of the works would change if:

- the drawings were the size of a postage stamp
- the photographs were drawings and the drawings were photographs
- the person in the drawings was wearing sunglasses
- the designs on the surfboards referenced hibiscus flowers instead of rainforest shields
- the photograph was taken in a shopping mall

Identify what the title *wegrewhere* (we grew here) refers to and **suggest** why Ah Kee would choose this title for these photographs. How does this title inform the interpretation of the rainforest shield designs on the surfboards? **Discuss** why Ah Kee would choose Surfers Paradise, Gold Coast, Queensland as the location for this photo, and what is the cultural significance of the beach in these works.

Imagine these photographs were postcards and **articulate** a message that might be written on the back.

Ah Kee has used his family in his artworks. The drawings are of his young son and the three men on the beach are his cousins. Does this make a difference to the way you interpret the work?

Ah Kee feels that it is the role of art to prompt questions. **Pose** a list of questions raised by these works.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Ah Kee cites identity as a core theme in his work as an artist. The photographs in *Saltwater Country* are part of a larger body of work made in 2007 titled *cantchant*, including text pieces, videos and sculptures. **Research** this body of work and **analyse** how the different elements work together to highlight issues of identity.

Discuss what is meant by the term 'stereotype'. **Consider** how stereotypes can encourage broad assumptions and generalisations about people and behaviour. What is the effect of this?

Describe the attributes generally associated with the terms 'bronzed Aussie' and 'noble savage'. **Analyse** what they communicate about perceptions of race. Is Ah Kee's depiction of Aussie surfers stereotypical? Why or why not?

Look through magazines and on the internet for images of popular culture that promote stereotypes. **Re-work** these images to encourage a different perspective.



Image

Vernon AH KEE
Gavin (Image 1) 2014
Charcoal, pastel and acrylic on canvas
Dimensions: 184 x 153 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane
Photography: Mick Richards