

CONVERSATIONS IN SPACE

EDUCATION RESOURCE
VCE ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING
AND VCE CREATIVE PRACTICE



CONVERSATIONS IN SPACE

Conversations in Space is a group exhibition that features artists at differing stages of their careers. The exhibition asks us to think about how we create connections between each generation in our society.

Helen Maudsley has been painting for more than 60 years and is one of Australia's most accomplished artists. She creates many visual 'drafts' of her ideas before producing a final painting. Maudsley describes her works as visual essays or poems constructed of lines, numbers, letters, geometry, and symbols from everyday life.

Laura Skerlj uses social media as source material for her paintings which she works and reworks directly on the canvas. Her paintings become more about the application and use of paint and as time goes on the original source of her ideas become less recognisable. Skerlj is interested in the mutability of painting as her original subject is taken apart and comes back together again.

Noriko Nakamura creates carved limestone sculptures that are full of life and movement. Nakamura draws inspiration from Japanese mythology, food and the female body and imbues her sculptures and inanimate objects with the attributes of animals, people and plants. Sometimes her sculptures are like relics or found objects from the past and other times they are ritualistic to be used as part of an unknown ceremony or ritual.

Alex Hobba's animation uses 3D gaming software as a way to explore genre and communication and the representation of information. As the voice of a narrator tells a story over a series of changing images of people, places and situations it is hard to determine what is fact and what is fiction, and why our stories often require a hero.

As you explore the exhibition, think about how the works relate to one another, what they have in common and how they are reflected in the title *Conversations in Space*.

Glossary

Conversation: a talk, especially an informal one, between two or more people, in which news and ideas are exchanged.

Flat Time: time that passes without any changes – the time between things happening.

Junk Time: a time of constant distractions for instance when we are in a social media loop, our eyes flickering between images, unable to stop and question what we are seeing.

Flaneur: Flaneur is a French word meaning someone who 'saunters' around observing society.

Aggregate: a material or structure formed from a mass of fragments or particles loosely compacted together.

High Key (as in colour): having a predominance of light or bright tones.

Animism: the attribution of a living soul to plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena.

Relic: an historic object that has survived from an earlier time, that is now no longer used.

Cover image:

Laura Skerlj

Untitled (cherry bomb) 2023

oil on linen

35 x 45cm

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CONVERSATIONS IN SPACE

Exploring the Exhibition

Take some time to wander through the exhibition and consider the following ideas:

Are there any clues as to why the curator James Lynch has chosen these particular works to be exhibited together?

What do the works have in common?

Explain how the title *Conversation in Space* might fit with the works in the exhibition.

How do the works relate to one another?

Are there any obvious differences between the work of Helen Maudsley with her 60+ year career and the work of the younger artists?

What experiences might be shared between the artists?

Find two works by different artists and describe what you find is similar and different about them.

Consider the art elements and principles and how they have been used. Are there similar applications in more than one of the works?

Think in particular about:

Movement

Colour

Texture

Composition

A flaneur is described as 'someone who saunters around observing society'. Each work is a reflection of the world around us in some way. Choose a work and write a short reflection on how you think it mirrors the world around us.

The curator explains that he feels a great sense of purpose when being able to offer emerging artists opportunities to be able to exhibit their work, alongside more established artists. Why do you think that might be?

VCE ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING

[See End Notes for Curriculum links
VCE Art Making and Exhibiting](#)

Consider and discuss the following as it relates to the work of each artist:

Art Making Practice

Why do you think the artist has chosen to represent their ideas the way they have?

Describe how the art elements and principles appear in the work

Consider the materials or medium of the work. How does the type of material used eg: paint, limestone, or the medium eg: animation effect how we make meaning from the work?

Are there any unique or recognisable methods or conventions used to create the work? Why do you think the artist has chosen to use these methods or conventions?

Are the influences or inspiration for the work of each artist obvious? How are the artists ideas reflected in the work?

Exhibiting the Works

How does the title of the exhibition *Conversations in Space* influence the way you view the exhibition?

Does the way the works are arranged in the exhibition reveal any connections between the artists and/ or the works themselves?

Explain your ideas around why the curator James Lynch may have chosen these artists and art works in particular to feature in the exhibition?

Has the way the exhibition has been designed effect the way you 'read' the work or move through the exhibition space?

As a snapshot of contemporary Australian artists, what does the exhibition tell us about the concerns of current practising artists?

VCE ART CREATIVE PRACTICE

[See End Notes for Curriculum links](#)
[VCE Art Making and Exhibiting](#)

The Structural Lenses from the VCAA Creative Practice Study Design:

The Structural Lens

The Structural Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork, and its relationship with the artist and viewer or audience, through the investigation of the use of art elements and art principles, and the application of materials, techniques and processes. It also considers the stylistic qualities and symbolism evident in the artwork, and the context in which artists work and in which artworks are presented or viewed. The Structural Lens can inform the other lenses.

The Personal Lens

The Personal Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork through the investigation of the personal feelings, beliefs and life experiences of the artist. The evaluation and interpretation of an artwork can be influenced by the life experiences, personal feelings and beliefs of the viewer or audience and the context in which artists work and in which artworks are presented or viewed.

The Cultural Lens

The Cultural Lens informs the analysis and interpretation of an artwork through the investigation of social, historical and cultural influences and representations. This includes the influence of the time and place in which the artwork is made, presented or viewed, as well as the social, historical, political, philosophical and economic influences on the practices of the artist, and how these are reflected in the artwork.



Alex Hobba

still from Cockfighter's Ghost 2023

digital video consisting of 3D render animation, AI voice acting and human voices

sound design by Christopher Maruca

6:35mins looped

© copyright and courtesy of the artist

Consider the exhibition and the works featured using the Interpretive Lenses:

Choose an artwork and answer the following questions about the work:

Consider it from a **structural perspective**. Why might the artist have chosen to use certain **materials, techniques and processes** to create the work?

Consider it from the artist's **personal perspective**. What does the work share about the life or concerns of the artist? How are the artist's own **personal experiences and/ or viewpoints** explored through the work?

Think about the work from a **cultural perspective**. What does the work tell us about the world the artist lives in, the **community or society** they are a part of? How do you think the artist is addressing concerns that they see reflected in the society or communities around them?

How has the artist used **visual language** to communicate their ideas? Are there any familiar features to the work? Are there **symbolic features** in the work? Are there parts of the work that the artist is using to represent something other than what you can see?

WORKS IN FOCUS



Helen Maudsley
The Power of the Written Word; Without the Written Word, Art Doesn't Exist. 2020
oil on canvas
76 x 66.5cm
© and courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries
Melbourne

Helen Maudsley was born in 1927 in Melbourne. She studied music at the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music before studying painting at the National Gallery of Victoria Gallery School in the 1940's. She has had regular solo exhibitions since the 1950's. Maudsley explores everyday life using a unique visual language. The paintings in this exhibition were all recently created by Maudsley who is now in her mid-nineties. They are evidence of a highly creative and responsive artist.

Additional Resources:

Helen Maudsley - Artist Profile
www.artistprofile.com.au/helen-maudsley/

Helen Maudsley 2023
niagaragalleries.com.au

Questions

Imagine walking into one of Helen Maudsley's paintings – can you describe what that might be like?

What might that feel like? (Hot, cold, windy, still?)

What is the mood like in that painting? (Happy, sad, confusing?)

What might you hear? (music, items moving, voices?)

Are they soft sounds or loud sounds?

Activities

Helen Maudsley creates detailed and poetic titles for her work. Choose a work and come up with an alternative title that reflects what you see and how you feel about the work.

Experiment with composition – choose a piece of text – a book, an article in the paper, an event that has happened. Brainstorm your ideas about the event and create a list of all the items, objects, phrases that form part of the story. Experiment with collage, pattern, colour, pieces of text or numerals to create a creative interpretation of that event or story. Draw on your experience of 'stepping into the painting' previously to help with your creative decision making.

NB: you can also do this activity with objects assembled and photographed.

Notes:

WORKS IN FOCUS



Noriko Nakamura
Milking my heart, 2019
 Carved limestone
 Dimensions
 © and courtesy of the artist

Noriko Nakamura is a Japanese-born, Castlemaine-based artist who uses stone carving and organic elements to make installations that draw on ideas of animism and ritualistic practices. Using traditional hand-carving techniques Nakamura transforms limestone from an inanimate and heavy material into playful forms, suggestive of movement and lightness. Nakamura is interested in this transformative process and how the manipulation of materials is used to imbue a material or object with significance, changing its meaning and our relationship to it.

Additional Resources:

Noriko Nakamura
noriko-nakamura.com

Questions

What organic or living shapes and forms can you identify in *Milking my heart*?

What ideas do you think the artist is trying to express?

Imagine this sculpture is based on a story or fairytale – what do you think might have happened in the tale?

Activities

Create a sketch of *Milking my heart* and annotate the drawing with notes about what each part of the sculpture reminds you of. Think about what living things the artist is representing on her work.

On that same sketch, write or draw how you think the form she has represented would move if it were actually alive?

What kind of sound would it make?

In what kind of environment might it exist?

Create your own small sculpture inspired by the work of Noriko Nakamura using found and recycled objects. Start with a central object as the base from which to add organic looking elements. Be creative with found or recycled materials. How can you make them look organic and alive? Try and keep the materials used to one colour or paint your work one colour when it is finished. This will help highlight the forms in the work. Give your work a title.

Notes:



Helen Maudsley
The Coil, the Screws, the Rectangle, and the Chain that Hangs
 Colours and Tones, not mixed, but Calling to Each Other. 2022
 oil on canvas
 61 x 61.2cm
 © and courtesy of the artist and Niagara Galleries Melbourne

Links to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Art Making and Exhibiting

Including but not limited to...

Unit 1: Explore, expand, investigate

Area of Study 3 – Investigate – research and present
 What role do artworks and their presentation play in society?
 Outcome 3

Key knowledge

- the influence of context on the practices of Australian artists and their artworks
- characteristics and properties of materials used by artists to make artworks
- ways in which artists apply materials in the making of artworks
- ways in which artists use techniques and processes to make artworks
- how artists represent ideas and use subject matter to communicate meaning in artworks
- strategies used to create a cohesive presentation about artists and their artworks
- ways to discuss artworks and art forms on display
- strategies used to prepare information for the exhibition of artworks
- appropriate terminology used to discuss artworks and exhibitions

Key skills

- explore and discuss the contexts of a range of Australian artists and their artworks

- use a range of resources to research how artists have used materials, techniques and processes in the making of their artworks
- explain and evaluate how artists have used materials, techniques and processes to make artworks
- analyse how artists represent ideas and use subject matter to communicate meaning in their artworks
- use a variety of methods and strategies to present information for a proposed exhibition of artworks by Australian artists
- develop and present information discussing a range of artworks by Australian artists
- use appropriate terminology in the discussion of artworks and their presentation

Unit 2: Understand, develop and resolve

Area of Study 1 – How are thematic exhibitions planned and designed?

Outcome 1

Key knowledge

- background information about artists and artworks
- the ways artworks in an exhibition have been selected for display
- the influence of contexts on the representation of subject matter and the communication of meaning in artworks
- connections between artworks in a thematic exhibition
- strategies used to exhibit artworks from different contexts in a thematic exhibition, including ways to select and form relationships between artworks in the exhibition
- processes used to document the design of an exhibition in their Visual Arts journal
- use of appropriate art terminology in the presentation and evaluation of artworks

Key skills

- use a range of resources to investigate information about artists and artworks
- justify the selection of artworks for a thematic exhibition
- identify and analyse the influence of contexts on the representation of subject matter and ideas to communicate meaning in artworks
- explain the connections between artworks in a thematic exhibition
- discuss the ways in which artworks from different contexts are exhibited in a thematic exhibition
- research and select artworks to design a thematic exhibition
- explore a thematic exhibition and then design a thematic exhibition for an audience
- develop and present information about a range of artworks in a thematic exhibition
- document the research and design of a thematic exhibition in their Visual Arts journal
- use appropriate art terminology in the evaluation and presentation of artworks

Unit 3:

Collect, extend and connect

Area of Study 3 – Curate, design, propose

Outcome 3

Key knowledge

- the characteristics of exhibitions
- the characteristics of exhibition spaces
- the responsibilities involved in curating an exhibition
- methods used for identifying and analysing the curatorial considerations and the thematic connections between the artworks and artists in an exhibition
- methods used to develop didactic information about the theme, artists and artworks in an exhibition
- the strategies used to plan and develop an exhibition in a specific space
- art terminology used to discuss exhibitions, artists and artworks

Key skills

- research and discuss the characteristics of exhibitions
- research and discuss the characteristics of exhibition spaces
- research and discuss the responsibilities involved in curating an exhibition
- discuss and analyse the curatorial considerations and the thematic connections between the artworks of artists in an exhibition
- develop an exhibition proposal for a specific space using the works of the three selected artists from Unit 3 Area of Study 1
- explain and analyse the presentation of artworks in the exhibition and the thematic connections between them
- present and discuss didactic information including the theme of the exhibition, and the artists and artworks
- discuss the characteristics of exhibitions, exhibition spaces, artists and artworks using art terminology

Links to the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) Art Creative Practice

Including but not limited to...

Unit 1:

Interpreting artworks and exploring the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1 – Artists

Artworks and audiences

Outcome 1, applying the structural and personal lenses when analysing artwork

Key knowledge

- the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- the use of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the use of personal opinions and points of view about artworks
- the ways artists use visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in their artworks
- terminology used in discussion of artists and their artworks

Key skills

- analyse and discuss the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- apply relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- formulate and justify personal opinions with reference to artworks and related sources
- analyse and discuss how artists use visual language to communicate ideas and meaning in their artworks
- use appropriate art terminology and references to a range of sources in the discussion of artists and their artworks

Unit 2:

Interpreting artworks and developing the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1 – The artist, society and culture

Outcome 1, use the cultural lens to compare the practices of artists and artworks from different cultures and times

Key knowledge

- the role and purpose of art in different cultural contexts and times
- the use of relevant aspects of the Cultural Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- the use, as appropriate, of relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks
- methods of making and presenting artworks in different historical and contemporary cultural contexts
- how artworks reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of different cultures
- the different ways that artists collaborate to make artworks
- the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- referencing to support the analysis, evaluation and interpretation of artworks
- art terminology used in the analysis, evaluation and comparison of artworks and the practices of artists

Key skills

- apply the Cultural Lens to analyse and interpret artworks from different cultures and times
- apply, as appropriate, relevant aspects of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret artworks
- compare artworks from different cultural and historical contexts
- analyse diverse and alternative approaches to making and presenting artworks
- analyse methods of making and presenting artworks in historical and contemporary cultural contexts
- analyse how artworks can reflect the beliefs, values and traditions of different cultures
- investigate the different ways that artists collaborate to make artworks
- evaluate and compare the practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures
- use references to artworks to support analysis, evaluation and interpretation
- use appropriate art terminology to analyse, evaluate and compare the practices of artists and artworks

Terminology From the VCE Art Making and Exhibiting Study Design

[VCE Art Making and Exhibiting \(vcaa.vic.edu.au\)](http://vcaa.vic.edu.au)

Art elements

Colour, line, shape, form, tone, texture, sound, time and light

Art principles

Emphasis (focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition (including pattern), balance, contrast, proportion, space and scale

Aesthetic qualities

Aesthetic qualities are usually explained as the way in which art elements, art principles, materials and techniques work together to influence the mood or emotion of an artwork. The term refers to the visual appeal of an artwork and how aesthetic qualities evoke an emotional impact and reaction within the viewer.

For the purposes of this study the following are accepted explanations of aesthetic qualities:

- the visual appearance of an artwork
- an emotional impact or reaction the artist intends the viewer to experience
- the use of art elements and art principles that allow the artist to convey a certain mood and evoke feelings in the viewer
- the materials and techniques used in an artwork to create qualities that speak to the overall feeling, mood or emotion of the artwork.

Art forms

An art form is an established form of artistic expression. For the purposes of VCE Art Making and Exhibiting, art forms can include but are not limited to painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, film, video, ceramics, sound, photography, digital artworks, installations, performance, interdisciplinary practices, fashion, textiles and street art.

The materials are the various properties and characteristics of an art form. Materials are manipulated through the use of tools and equipment, known as techniques. The processes used in the making of artworks in specific art forms include the activities, procedures and investigation engaged by artists.

Context

The context of an artwork is the frame of reference that allows the meaning of the artwork to be interpreted. Interpretation of the meaning of an artwork can evolve from the context. The context of an artwork can be the location and time in which the artwork is made, presented or viewed. Context can also be economic, philosophical, historical, social or cultural influences on the practices of the artist, the artist's intentions, and their representation of ideas, values and beliefs in their artworks. The artist's intentions for the presentation of their work, its exhibition in current and subsequent locations, and the values, beliefs and interests of the audience also provide the context for the artwork.

Critique

A critique is a discursive collaborative environment that is organised to engage, explore, express, present and evaluate artworks and to understand, reflect on and improve awareness of the characteristics of art making.

Influences and inspiration

Influences occur and are used throughout art making and include artists and artworks. Inspiration can be viewed more broadly and includes objects, memories and contexts that are personal to the artist.

Visual language

Visual language combines the art elements and art principles with materials, techniques and processes to communicate meaning and personal, cultural and contemporary ideas to an audience.

Additional Terminology From the VCE Art Creative Practice Study Design

[Pages - VCE Art Making and Exhibiting \(vcaa.vic.edu.au\)](http://vcaa.vic.edu.au)

Body of Work

In VCE Art Creative Practice, the Body of Work consists of personal responses by the student in their art practice. The Body of Work consists of artworks that integrate the four components of the Creative Practice: research and exploration, experimentation and development, reflection and evaluation, and refinement and resolution. Using the Creative Practice the student will produce a collection of artworks, related to each other through ideas, subject matter, style, art form, or materials and techniques. Each of the artworks that comprise the Body of Work should be of equal complexity and importance to the overall collection.

Contemporary artworks and artists

For the purposes of this study, contemporary artists are defined as those who have produced art in the 21st century or since 2001. Contemporary art mirrors contemporary culture and society. Throughout this study students compare historical and contemporary artworks and artists' practices.

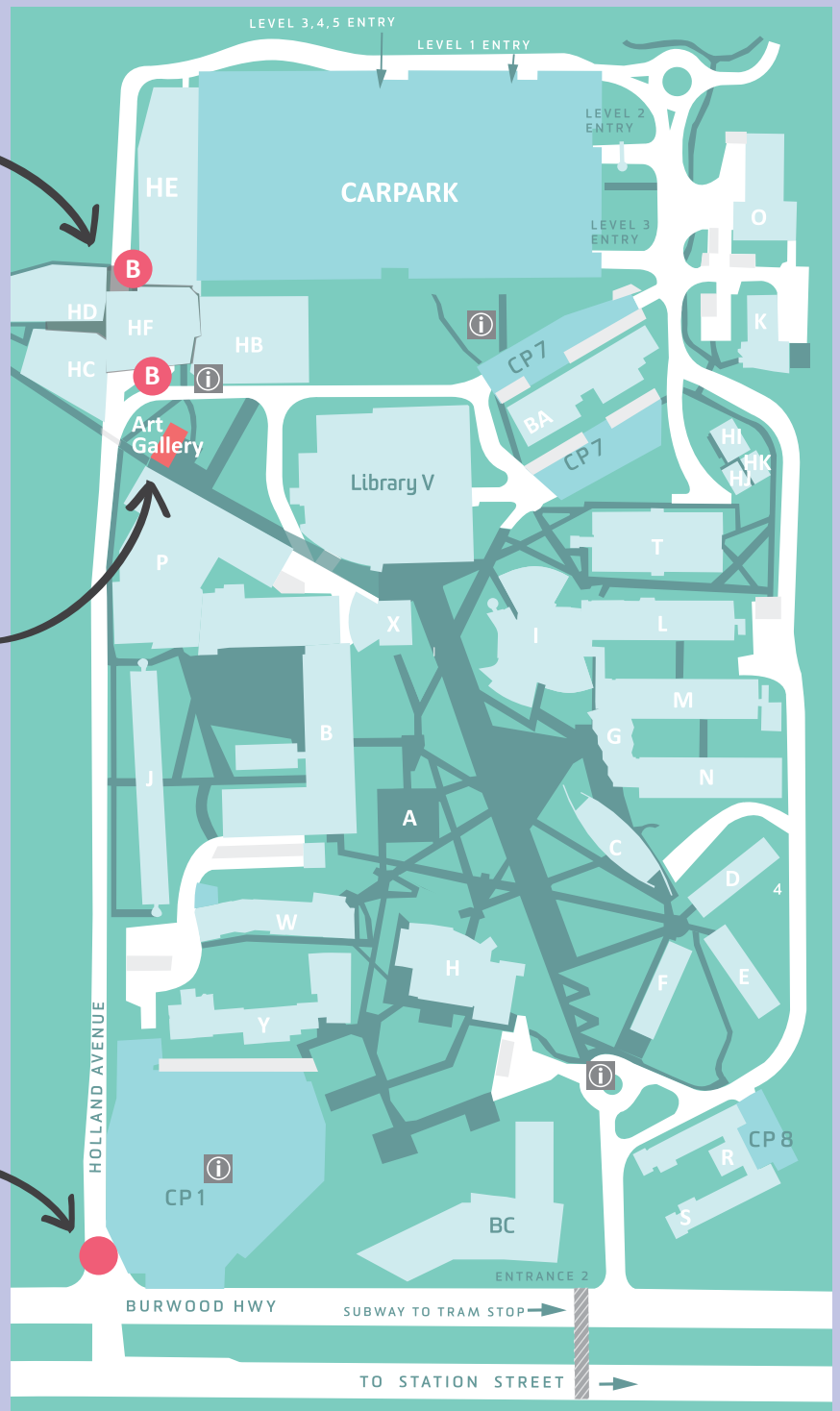
Bus Drop Off Point

30-minute Loading Zone here – this is the drop off point for school buses. Additional bus drop off point 10m along if Loading Zone occupied.

Deakin University Art Gallery
Building FA

Deakin University Burwood Campus

Enter via Gate 1 from Burwood Highway. Travel down Holland Avenue to Bus Drop Off Point, just after bridge overpass.



The Deakin University Art Collection and Galleries Unit offers school tours and hands on workshops for students from F – 10 and for VCE Art Making and Exhibiting and Art Creative Practice. To discuss our programs and how we can tailor a program to suit your school’s needs, please contact our Education and Public Programs Officer, Tabitha Davies.

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W: [Deakin University Art Gallery - Exhibitions and Events](#)



DEAKIN UNIVERSITY ART GALLERY

Head to our website deakin.edu.au/art-collection/ for information about current exhibitions and keep up-to-date on our activities and exhibitions here:

-  [Facebook.com/ArtDeakin](https://www.facebook.com/ArtDeakin)
-  [Twitter.com/ArtDeakin](https://twitter.com/ArtDeakin)
-  [Instagram.com/deakinartgallery](https://www.instagram.com/deakinartgallery)
-  [izi.travel](#) - Deakin Art Collection and sculpture walk guides

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SCHOOL PROGRAMS

For information regarding our school Programs or to book a tour and/ or workshop, please scan here.



Deakin University Art Gallery Building FA, Melbourne Burwood Campus, 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood VIC 3125
Enquiries T +61 3 9244 5344 E artgallery@deakin.edu.au
Gallery Hours Monday – Friday, 10 am – 4 pm During exhibition periods. Closed public holidays. Free Entry

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which Deakin University stands and pay our respect to Elders: past, present and future.