

GEORGE GITTOES: UKRAINE GUERNICA

EDUCATION RESOURCE
VCE ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING
AND VCE CREATIVE PRACTICE



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Cover Image:
George Gittoes
Russian Bear 2022
(detail)
oil on canvas
© courtesy the artist

George Gittoes is an artist who has visited some of the most dangerous places in the world, recording his experiences through painting, film making and photography. He believes that art can counteract the power of war and has worked in war torn countries such as Afghanistan and Ukraine. His time in Ukraine is the focus of his exhibition *Ukraine Guernica*.

Gittoes and his collaborator Hellen Rose have developed friendships with artists, poets and other creatives in these countries and worked with them on creative projects to highlight not only the devastating effects of war but also to promote peace. Gittoes and Rose immerse themselves in communities at war, believing that art can 'empower the viewer and inspire courage'¹ and that art can be used for spiritual and humanitarian needs.

1. George Gittoes, *Ukraine Guernica* exhibition catalogue, p7

Glossary

Guernica (Picasso): Painted in 1937, *Guernica* is a large-scale work by Picasso that depicts the horrors and impact of war on civilians and animals. It was painted in reaction to the bombing of the city Guernica, Spain just before the Second World War.

Intervention: an action taken to stop something happening or improve a situation.

Psyche: to do with the human mind and how we think.

Collaboration: working with one or more others to create or produce something.

Egalitarian: the belief that all people are equal and deserve the same rights and opportunities.

Graphic Novel: a book that tells a narrative visually, often in a comic strip format.



George Gittoes working in his visual journal in Bucha, Ukraine, 2022

EXPLORING THE EXHIBITION

Take some time to walk around the exhibition and consider the works. The works have been described as representing fragility, volatility, and the uncertainty of the world today.

You may notice that some of the works are referencing dark and harrowing events – but the artist’s aim with his work is to inspire peace. How do you feel they do that?

George Gittoes has stated that “humanity can end violent conflict and embrace peace through creativity”². Looking at his work, what are some ways you think it does that?

Gittoes talks about how going to Ukraine was like travelling back to the time of the German Expressionists. What is it about this art movement that you feel he relates his experience to?

Gittoes has provided materials to artists and filmmakers in the war torn places he has visited to ‘help young filmmakers and artists to make their voice heard and to reach the world’³. Why do you think he does this – what are potentially some of the benefits?

The artist and his collaborators found a building called the ‘House of Culture’ in the Ukraine that had housed artefacts and artworks and had been completely destroyed. They prepared exhibitions and performances which they showed in the ruins. What do you think was the purpose of this?

George Gittoes discusses the visibility and scale of the artwork he and his collaborators produce as being ‘like a phoenix (coming out) of destruction’⁴. Discuss what you think he means by this. How important is the physical scale of the work he is producing?

The artist talks about how his work explores not only the physical effect of war but also the psyche. How do you see this evident in his work? Choose an artwork and describe the visual elements you believe represent the psychological impact of war.

What kinds of symbology and visual language has the artist used to represent his thoughts and ideas about war?

The effect of war on children is of major concern for Gittoes. How is this reflected in his work? Choose a work and write down your thoughts.

George Gittoes work has been described as being similar to the following artists:

Albrecht Dürer (German) Born 1471
El Greco (Greek) Born 1541
Francisco Goya (Spanish) Born 1746
Gustave Doré (French) Born 1832

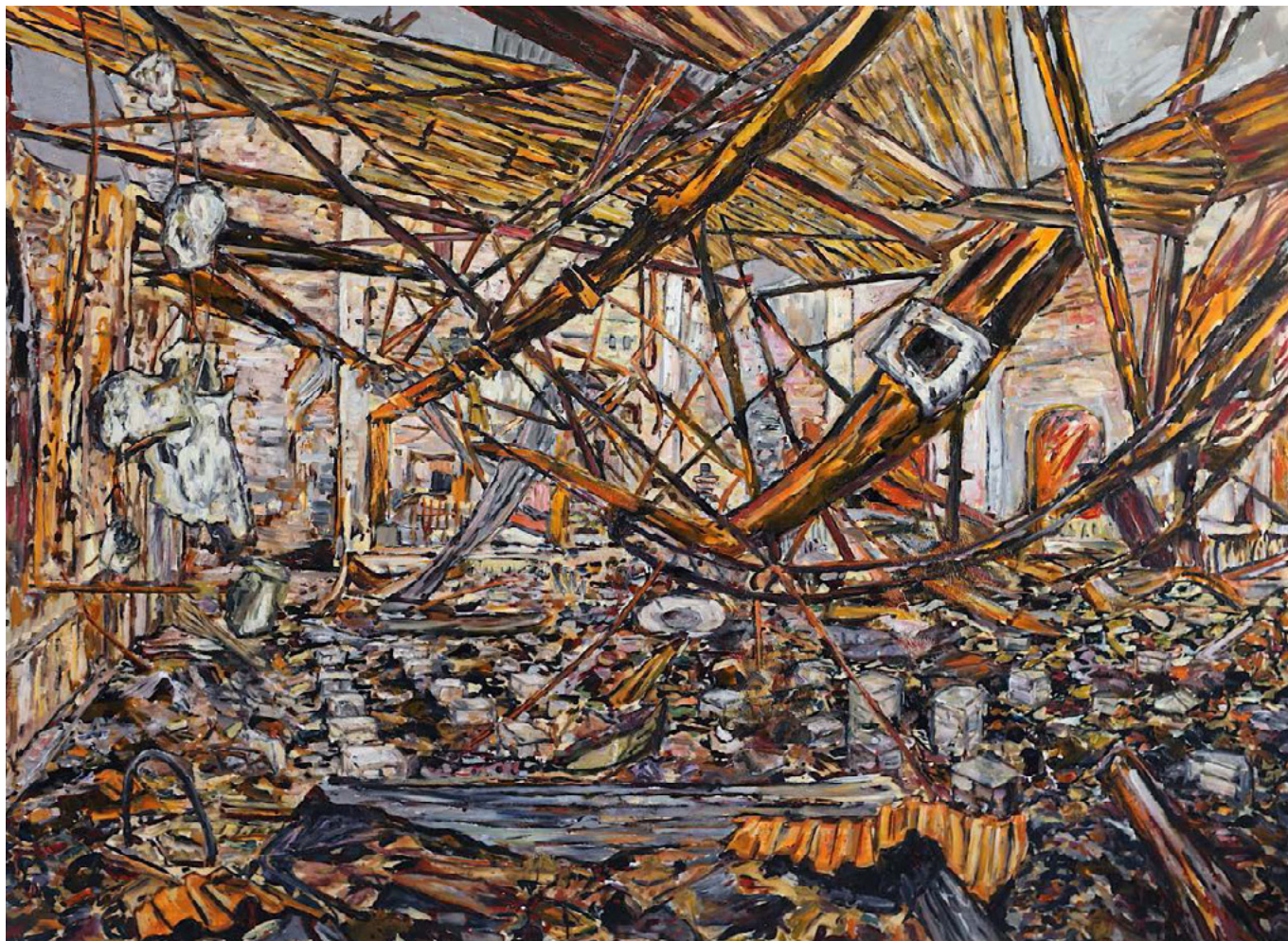
Choose one artist from the list above and make comparisons between their work and the work in the exhibition.

1. George Gittoes, *Ukraine Guernica* exhibition catalogue, p 7

2. As above p 8

3. As above p12

WORKS IN FOCUS



House of Art depicts a real life building known as the 'House of Culture' in Irpin, Ukraine that was targeted in the fighting. It housed artwork and artefacts but was completely destroyed.

"The House of Culture was gutted but this destruction had a kind of beauty which will be gone when it is rebuilt. Hellen and I brought the place back to functional life by organising Ukrainian artists and the community to make the space safe as a temporary performance and exhibition venue. It was our way of showing that the artistic spirit cannot be destroyed by bombs and bullets".

– **George Gittoes**

George Gittoes
House of Art, 2022
oil on canvas
© courtesy the artist

WORKS IN FOCUS



“Every building home and apartment in the city of Borodyanka (Ukraine) had been destroyed but a classical Ancient Greek marble statue remained standing in the rubble, undamaged. The female figure appeared to be holding a mobile phone in her hand with her head down looking into its screen. This is the first war I have experienced where everyone has become a photojournalist and is sharing images of what they see and experience on social media. I was amazed to see people watching the small screens of their phones more intently than the aftermath of bombs and missiles that were hitting the buildings around them. Flames were flickering above their heads while their eyes remained glued to images filmed by a neighbour or someone a few blocks away”

– **George Gittoes**

George Gittoes
Through the Glass, 2022
oil on canvas
© courtesy the artist

VCE ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING

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

As a group, how do the works together in the exhibition explore the theme of war? Focus on one work in the exhibition and make some notes about how it depicts war and how you feel about it.

Take some time looking at the visual diaries. Describe some instances or examples where you see how these initial drawings have developed into larger works?

Describe some of the challenges you think the artist may have faced painting and creating art in an active war zone?

Can you think of any other exhibitions/ and or galleries and museums spaces that might explore war themes? How might these spaces and exhibitions differ from the exhibition here at Deakin? Perhaps consider how the National War Museum might display their collection. What is the story they might want to tell through their exhibitions?

How do you think the experience of being present in the destruction may have effected the work of the artist and his collabrators?

Why do you think George Gittoes chooses to work in war torn areas? What is his aim or purpose?

There are many similarities between the work found in graphic novels and the work of George Gittoes. Choose a work in the exhibition and write a paragraph or piece of script or text to go with it – as if it were part of a bigger story in a graphic novel.

VCE ART CREATIVE PRACTICE

[See End Notes for Curriculum links](#)
[VCE Art Creative Practice](#)

Australian war artists travel with the Australian army during all major conflicts. What might be some of the challenges they face?

He describes everyone now as being a 'photojournalist'. Reading through the information about his painting *Through the Glass*, describe some of the impacts that social media has on the situation he describes both visually and through the information provided on the artwork label.

Describe George Gittoes style and how it might impact the way you feel about the war he is depicting.

How does his painting explore the cultural devastation that happens in warfare?

George Gittoes collaborates with many local people and artists in the countries he visits including film makers, painters, poets and performers. What kind of impact or influence do you think this has on his work? And in turn, how do you think having George Gittoes work with them influences or impacts the local artists?

What might be lost for instance when a building such as the 'House of Culture' is destroyed? What might be the ongoing and lasting impact?



George Gittoes on location April 2022, Borodyanke, Ukraine.
 Painting in progress title *House Where Children Lived*, 2022.
 Photo by Kate Parunova. © courtesy the artist

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

[Link to 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

Unit 4:

Consolidate, present and conserve

Area of Study 3 – Conserve, present and care

Key knowledge

- methods used and considerations involved in the presentation, conservation and care of artworks while on display in an exhibition space
- considerations of conservation and care that relate to artworks in the handling, storage and transportation of artworks

- relevant conservation and care methods that students can apply to their own artworks when on display
- relevant conservation and care methods that students can apply to their own artworks in storage, handling and transportation
- terminology used to discuss the conservation and care of artworks

Key skills

- investigate, identify and evaluate the methods used and considerations involved in the presentation, conservation and care of artworks while on display in an exhibition space
- investigate, identify and evaluate conservation and care in the handling, storage and transportation of artworks
- discuss the relevant conservation and care methods that can apply to their own artworks when on display compared to artworks studied in exhibitions visited in the current year of study
- discuss the relevant conservation and care methods that can apply to their own artworks in storage, handling and transportation compared to artworks studied in exhibitions visited in the current year of study
- apply terminology in the discussion of the conservation and care of artworks

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

[Link to VCE 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.

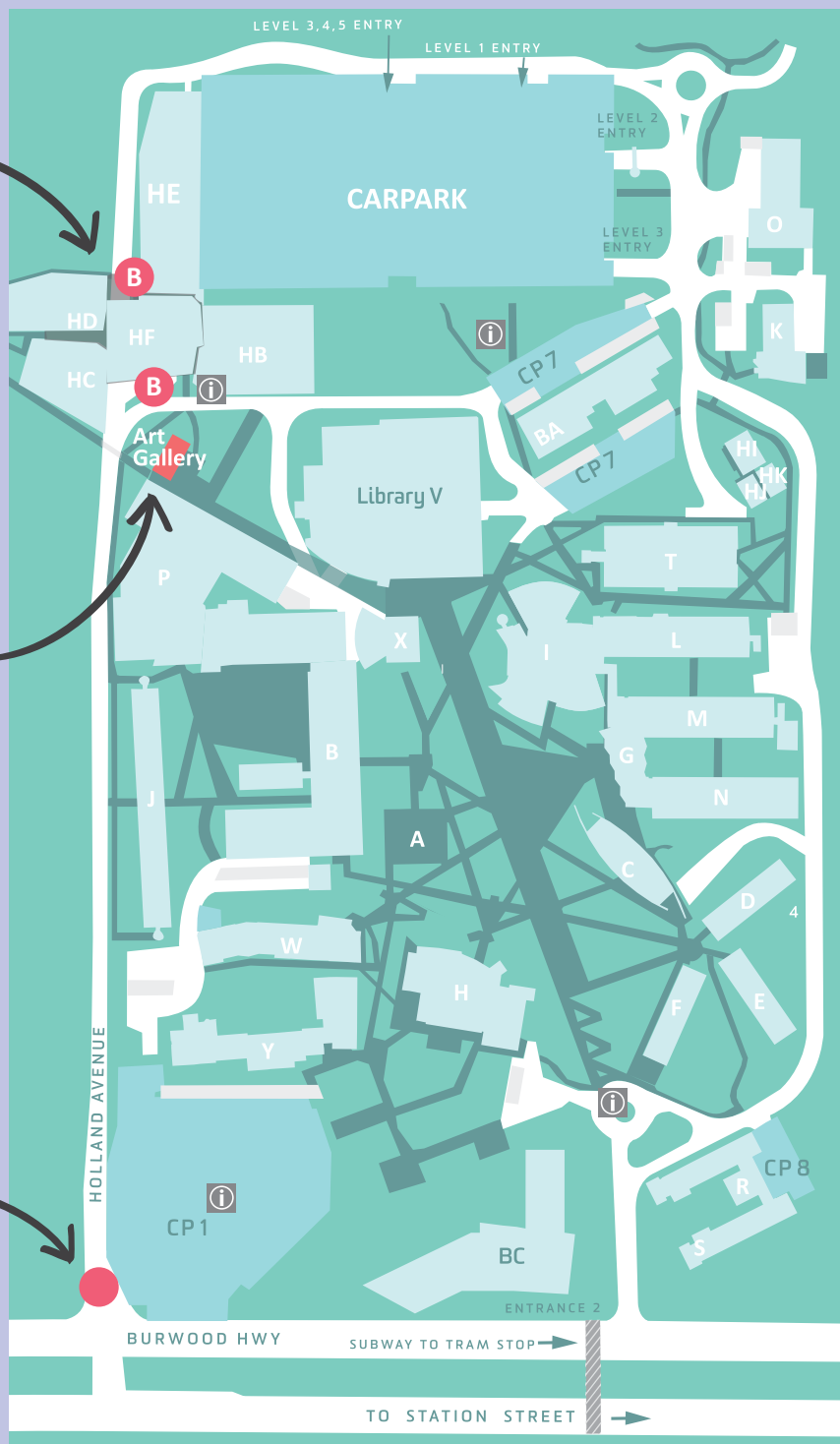
Bus Drop Off Point

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: [School programs](#) | [Deakin University Art Gallery](#)

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

Image: Andrew Rogers, *I Am VI* 2016 and *I am VII* 2016, bronze Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by the artist, 2018 and 2019, Deakin University Art Collection, image © and courtesy of the artist, photo by Simon Peter Fox



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.