

ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili

CURATED BY DR LÉULI ESHRĀGHI

TARRAWARRA
MUSEUM
OF ART
BIENNIAL 2023



EDUCATION KIT

How to use this kit

This Education Kit has been developed to support learning alongside the exhibition TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*, curated by Dr Léuli Eshrāghi. The content of this Education Kit is created for VCE and tertiary students to select and adapt the questions and support materials provided within the resource for learning experiences in the classroom.

Contents

Exhibition Introduction	3
About the curator	4
Artists & Key Artworks	
Regina Pilawuk Wilson, <i>Wupun (Sun Mat)</i> 2023	5
Unbound Collective, <i>PERMEATE mapping skin and tides of saturated resistance</i> 2023	7
Elyas Alavi, <i>Cheshme-e jaan چشمه جان</i> (The Spirit Spring) 2023	10
Hoda Afshar, <i>Speak the Wind</i> 2015–21	12
Torika Bolatagici, <i>Value Form</i> 2023	14
Sancintya Mohini Simpson, <i>An ocean</i> 2023	16
David Sequeira, <i>You and I, we're like diamonds in the sky (after Rihanna)</i> 2023	
and <i>Looking to the stars for answers</i> 2023	18
Phuong Ngo, <i>Remastered</i> 2023	20
Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, <i>Tanpa Sempadan</i> 2023	22
Leyla Stevens, <i>GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda)</i> 2023	24
Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael, <i>Ngumpi (Home)</i> 2022–23	26
Vicki West, <i>kalikina brayly</i> 2023	28
Jenna Lee, <i>to gather, to nourish, to sustain</i> 2022–23	30
Bhenji Ra, <i>Trade Routes</i> 2023	32
Kirsten Lyttle, <i>taniwha (water monster)</i> series 2022–2023	34
<i>Very Like a Whale</i> 1886 2023	
<i>The Taniwha Again</i> 1886 2023	
<i>That Sea Serpent</i> 1891 2023	
<i>Taniwha Rears Head in Ngawha Prison Hearing</i> 2002 2023	
<i>Native Braves Taniwha</i> 1932 2023	
<i>The Taniwha</i> 1895 2023	
<i>Weird Calls to Auckland Council Hotline</i> 2019 2023	
Support Materials	36
Curriculum Links	36

Front Cover:

Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Ngugi Quandamooka

Ngumpi (Home) 2022–23

ungaire, driftwood, talwalpin, kowinka-dyed
silk and cotton, shells, string and ghost net
dimensions variable

installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*

Courtesy of the artists and Onespace Gallery, Brisbane

Photo: Andrew Curtis

Acknowledgement of Country

This exhibition is presented on the lands and waters of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation. TarraWarra Museum of Art acknowledges the Wurundjeri as the original Custodians of this land, and we extend our respect to their community, their Ancestors, and their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Exhibition Introduction

We gather on Wurundjeri Country to immerse ourselves in cultural renaissances of the Majority World, connecting through fresh and salt waters to many parts of this planet. The title of the TarraWarra Biennial 2023, *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*, is an alagā'upu, Sāmoan proverb, meaning 'the canoe obeys the wind'. This saying calls attention to the contemporary revival of Great Ocean celestial navigation practices, which has been accompanied by waves of renewal of language, thought, movement and relationships. In this spirit, this exhibition affirms the principle of humility towards living beings and storied places, which in turn generates neighbourly exchanges and joyful futures.

TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili* gathers new commissions by artists, poets, makers, performers, archivists, scholars, weavers, painters, carvers, and filmmakers who live and work across Australia. In the works held first within these walls as well as in their wider oeuvre, the commissioned artists maintain and strengthen indelible relationships and responsibilities to creation laws, ancestral estates, matrilineal practices, and material experimentation.

Most exhibitions framing the relationships between Australian society and surrounding archipelagos in south/southeast Asia and the south/southwest Great Ocean have focussed on continuing to sample and dabble in intercultural understanding. By any calendar measure, it is time for complex conversations to take place, so that the sublime aesthetic and intellectual practices born of these contexts may be deeply felt and understood.

Student Prompt

- Why is it important today that we engage in complex conversations and deepen our intercultural understanding 'between Australian society and surrounding archipelagos in south/southeast Asia and the south/southwest Great Ocean'?

About the curator



Dr Léuli Eshrāghi
Image courtesy of UQ Art Museum
Photo: Rhett Hammerton

Dr Léuli Eshrāghi (Seumanutafa + Tautua Sāmoan, Persian, Cantonese) intervenes in display territories to prioritise global Indigenous and Asian diasporic visibility, sensual and spoken languages, and ceremonial-political practices. Eshrāghi is recognised globally for their expertise in Indigenous critical theory, curatorial practice and museology in service of Indigenous and other racialised communities.

Their academic achievements include the inaugural Horizon/Indigenous Futures Postdoctoral Fellowship, Concordia University (2021); Doctor of Philosophy in Curatorial Practice, Monash University (2019); Summer Indigenous Art Intensive, University of British Columbia Okanagan (2021, 2017); Indigenous Art Journal Residency, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity (2017); Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Arts Management, University of Melbourne (2012); Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Melbourne (2009) and Bachelor of Arts, University of Queensland and Université Lyon II (2008). Dr Léuli Eshrāghi has realised new commissions for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Sharjah Biennial 14, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center among other group and solo presentations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and United States.

Eshrāghi has lectured at gatherings Creative Time, Hawai'i Contemporary Art Summit, Experimenter Curators' Hub, March Meeting, Dhaka Art Summit, Pacific Arts Association, 24 May 2021 and Asia Pacific Triennial, as well as at universities in Antwerp, San Juan, Melbourne, Yogyakarta, Montreal, Honolulu, Auckland and Victoria. They contribute to growing international critical practice across the Great Ocean and North America through residencies, exhibitions, publications, teaching and rights advocacy.

In addition to academic achievements, Dr Léuli Eshrāghi has curated or co-curated at UQ Art Museum, MacKenzie Art Gallery, UNSW Galleries, Vancouver Art Gallery, Artspace Aotearoa, Institute of Modern Art Brisbane, Gertrude Contemporary and Blak Dot Gallery, and advised at Photo Australia, Art Gallery of NSW and Palais de Tokyo.

For TarraWarra Biennial 2023, Dr Eshrāghi has gathered newly commissioned works by 15 artists/artist groups focused on the interconnectedness of the peoples of Australia, Asia and the Great Ocean.

About the artists:

Artist & Key Artworks: Regina Pilawuk Wilson



Regina Pilawuk Wilson
Ngan'gikurrunggurr, Marrithyel
Wupun (Sun Mat) 2023; *Wupun (Sun Mat)* 2023; *Wupun (Sun Mat)* 2023
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist and Durrmu Arts, Peppimenarti
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Ngan'gikurrunggurr and Marrithyel senior artist Regina Pilawuk Wilson is a renowned weaver and painter. Her large-scale triptych and two weavings reflect various segments of the wupun (sun mat) design taught across generations of her lineage. The specific elements and processes in her fibre works include gathering yerrgi (pandanus) or merrepen (sand palm), harvesting and processing a variety of bush dyes from leaves, berries and roots, and weaving complex compositions. These wupun further demonstrate the significant practice of the artist across decades and geographies.

These works are not monoliths by any measure, but rather they are spatial extensions of the visual language that the renowned artist embodies and carries with her from Peppimenarti, the community which Regina and her husband Harold Wilson founded for their people in 1973 as part of the large-scale cultural revival and return to living on ancestral homelands across so-called Northern Territory. The community is situated among cherished wetlands in a large Ngan'gikurrunggurr community-controlled estate to the south of the big city, Garramilla (Darwin), and is home to the Durrmu Arts centre.



Regina Pilawuk Wilson
 Ngan'gikurrungurr, Marrithyel
Wupun (Sun Mat) 2023
 synthetic polymer paint on linen
 triptych, overall: 150 x 357 cm
 installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
 Courtesy of the artist and Durrmu Arts, Peppimenarti
 Photo: Andrew Curtis



Regina Pilawuk Wilson
 Ngan'gikurrungurr, Marrithyel
Wupun (Sun Mat) 2023
 natural fibres
 140 cm diameter
 installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
 Courtesy of the artist and Durrmu Arts, Peppimenarti
 Photo: Andrew Curtis

Student Questions and Prompts

'The colours of Peppimenarti are distinct and unique. Passed down from ancestral knowledge, each colour is created through an interconnected process and relationship between environmental and in Country intergenerational knowledge in practice.' Durrmu Arts Centre, Instagram post, 16 March 2023.

- Research the processes that are used to harvest, and prepare the fibres used in the weavings that are created by Elder Regina Pilawuk Wilson and her community at Peppimenarti that are shared @ Durrmu Arts Centre on Instagram.
- From this research what do you think makes the colours of Peppimenarti 'distinct and unique'?
- Why would Regina describe these weavings as 'maps' for the trained weaver's eye?
- How has Regina expressed her cultural identity in these artworks in relation to her sense of place and Country?

Artists & Key Artwork: Unbound Collective

The Unbound Collective, the long-standing collaboration of legendary members, Mirning artist and scholar Dr Ali Gumillya Baker, Mbararam and Yidinyji artist and scholar Dr Faye Rosas Blanch, Narungga artist and scholar Dr Natalie Harkin, and Yankunytjatjara artist and scholar Dr Simone Ulalka Tur. For this Biennial, they have brought gifts of speech, critique, and kinship from Kaurna Yarta (Kaurna Country), where they live and work, to the upper reaches of the Birrarung yaluk (Yarra River).

Across film, skirts of natural fibres, sea gifts, soft light, and poetry, *PERMEATE | mapping skin and tides of saturated resistance*, 2023, processes their extensive research-creation into climate grief and rage, Indigenous blood-memory, the fast and slow erosion of land by water, and the irreversible salination poisoning of the mangrove forests of Kaurna Yarta.

In *PERMEATE*, Unbound Collective focuses attention on the spiritual and cultural flows impeded by the increasing saline poisoning of the precious few mangroves remaining in Kaurna Country. The soft repetition of breathing and the slow traversing of mangroves in the film relay a certain calm before the storm of what is to come. Every fourth breath comes from the mangroves: they are the nursery of life for oceans. This is not another ode to the stalwart resilience of an Indigenous people and place under siege. This is a lament carried through breath and its absence, song and hum and their absence, as much as an offering to land that is giving life. It is not as widely known that mangrove forests and seagrass meadows hold much more carbon than forests and plains on land. While the jarring imagery of the dead zone ecologies next to still living ones serves as an omen, this is balanced with a contemporary teaching that traverses times and geographies, for the cycle of twining and weaving natural fibres into netting that is also documented in this film pervades Indigenous worldviews of mutuality and balance.

As Unbound Collective poetically reflects, more than a salve, their work offers a 'slow mapping of decolonial flows that soak vital inlets and outlets, guiding currents to vast currents of kinship deep. This is our body as mangrove as skin and lung; a fragile filtering of lateral roots marked beyond thousands of years to reach toward skies and breathe free through tides of saturated resistance.'



Unbound Collective (Ali Gumillya Baker, Faye Rosas Blanch, Natalie Harkin, Simone Ulalka Tur)
Mirning, Mbararam / Yidinyji, Narungga, Yankunytjatjara
PERMEATE | mapping skin and tides of saturated resistance 2023
two channel HD video, two skirts of fibre, sea gifts, cotton,
feathers, shells, light, coolamon, salt, sound
video duration 00:08:00
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artists
Photo: Andrew Curtis



PERMEATE 1 | breath

your spongy finger-like aerial roots creep through mud in search of
 low tide you rise-up with the spring moon stretch
 toward light from fine-laced bark shedding skin to
 seagrass meadow nurturing sea life you softly bubble and
 creak and swallow you exhale through debris and every
 fourth breath you give

your vertical lungs sustain this fine-balanced estuary you
 aerate the shallows cleanse marsh and swamp and fish-
 nursery your fragile magnificence churns and rests where our
 waters meet and every fourth breath you give

waterlogged sediment seeps and drains from vein to outlet to river
 and sea your mouth wide-open filters the tide we savour
 your pungent nutrient-rich sweet decay we taste together
 to settle unsettle survive and thrive with every fourth
 breath you give

Unbound Collective (Ali Gumillya Baker, Faye Rosas Blanch, Natalie Harkin, Simone Ulalka Tur)
 Mirning, Mbararam / Yidinyji, Narungga, Yankunytjatjara
PERMEATE | mapping skin and tides of saturated resistance 2023
 installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua ususi fa'ava'asavili*
 Courtesy of the artists
 Photo: Andrew Curtis

PERMEATE 2 | salt

salt-mines maintain complex life from beach to mudflat to lagoon back to sea somehow you survive this mineral-harvest-carving you move with seasons flush feed and adapt from dry and low to wet and high to dry again concentrations of micro-life thrive while migratory birds feed and rest and nest and glide their long-haul flights from Siberia and Japan still rhythm and pulse rotate with stars and moon and tide

pastel-pink waters glisten bright evaporate to fade with the sun giant pyramid salt mounds grow a vast lucrative backdrop of white-gold and crystal peaks frame your perfect briny-life

face west across waters in front of the sun see a distant conveyor-belt of factory skylines silhouetted transforming from salt to soda-ash to extract and smelt this magic invisible ingredient necessary to our everyday from cakes to concrete to soap to glass industry rumbles and grinds-on in the background and every fourth breath you still give

PERMEATE 3 | dead-zone

watch this crime scene unfold in slow motion these are our Badlands a spectral reminder in hot dangerous times that capitalism kills decommissioned salt-mine gypsum-ponds fissure and rot porcelain-lined and cracked housing development plans are lodged as giant holdings of acidic-brine leak toxic-white death a quiet gentle seep and under the radar fully drained and on the move without penalty to poison and kill our body

brittle and stressed you seek oxygen and tidal reprieve they say 196 hectares impacted dead but you are beyond 4000 hectares violated you are our lungs and we will never be the same no nutrient-rich movement on skin and tongue you gasp and we strain toward your silence no bird-song no cool breeze no suctioning sweet-mud this is our unsettled unsettling we cry with you in disbelief we ache with you to breathe

PERMEATE 4 | knowing

our mind rests with midden-sites and blue whale bones with sandy ridges and chenier plains we find memories of feasting of old ways interrupted and we learn from Elders who know how to stay awake in this land of sleep

when your ever-present last-breath black-life exhales we recognise the choke we open-up to receive to churn and disrupt and collectively remember we watch listen and deep-dive-in then like your salt of the earth we rise our poised-balance refusal to disappear

your spongy finger-like aerial roots are slow to heal your tidal marshlands labour hard to ebb and flow to nurture and release you try to lure fish and crabs and snails into creeks at high tide and we know this ocean life will spawn from you seagrass beds will blanket you we will rest on your banks and love you reeds will dry-soak-split-twist from you make our nets to fish from you the world will know you as our body essential to life-giving life with every fourth breath you give

Student Questions and Prompts

- The poems above and the corresponding artwork *PERMEATE | mapping skin and tides of saturated resistance 2023* describe the irreversible salination poisoning of the mangrove forests of Kaurua Yarta. Read this poem to yourself and then again out loud whilst maintaining awareness of your breath. Describe in your own words these artists' relationship and awareness of the mangrove forest of Kaurua Yarta that is so evocatively and intimately shared in this poem. What have you learnt about the mangrove forest from this poem?
- Why do you think the artists have named this artwork *PERMEATE | mapping skin and tides of saturated resistance 2023*?
- What social and environmental issues are the artists expressing in this artwork?
- What do you think would be the benefits for these artists working as a collective?
- Reflect on all the different materials and processes the Unbound Collective have used in this artwork. What do you think are the advantages/strengths/possibilities in combining these different methodologies and materials to convey their ideas, meanings, concerns and feelings in this artwork?

Artist & Key Artwork: Elyas Alavi



Elyas Alavi
Cheshme-e jaan چشمه جان (*The Spirit Spring*) 2023
neon, red gum rehal, photographic collages
dimensions variable
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua ususi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Andrew Curtis

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body. This project is supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.

Hazara artist and poet Elyas Alavi's work *Cheshme-e jaan* چشمه جان (*The Spirit Spring*), 2023, comprises neon phrases, photographic collages and wooden rehal (book rests) made with repurposed railway sleepers, from some of the differing gauges no longer used on lines spanning Australia's south to north between Tarndanya (central Adelaide) and Garramilla (Darwin). These same railways were connected to important camel lines running 1000 miles in various directions which were established by well-organised South Asian cameleers from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kashmir, Pakistan and India. Elyas has drilled small holes in the timber to mark each rehal with Hazara motifs connected to ancestral villages and valleys across central Afghanistan. The vivid blue neon phrases that sit atop the rehal were first penned by the great Persian poet Mawlānā from Balkh, also known as Rumi.

جان من از جان تو چیزی شنود
چون دلم از چشمه تو آب خورد

*My soul heard something from yours
Since my heart drank from your spring*

Quoted in this context, they align Elyas's installation with the continuing visual language of Islamic design, architecture, and adornment from a time when Persian/Dari, Urdu/Hindi, Bengali, Baluch, Pashto, Adnyamathanha, Arabunna, Wangkangurru, Warumangu, and other First Nations languages were commonly spoken. Elyas's installation also references the relationships that were forged between the Cameleers and the Aboriginal peoples whose lands they traversed, with the poem, colour of the walls and the circular shape of the installation also referencing waterholes—a vital resource when travelling through remote regions—which were often shown to them by the custodians of these First Nations territories.

Displayed on an adjacent wall, a series of photographic collages bearing witness to storied places across Central Australia are held together with partial letters of the Persian/Dari alphabet; fragments of memory and connection. Here Elyas alludes to the injustices that the Cameleers were subject to under the White Australia Policy whereby, despite their considerable

contributions towards the colonial project, Cameleers were considered cheap labour, widely vilified by settler colonial governments and media, only granted temporary visas, prohibited from marrying or bringing their families, and refused citizenship. As Elyas poignantly affirms, to this day thousands of peoples from the same region as the Cameleers face similar discrimination due to the impacts of Western imperialism, with thousands surviving in administrative limbo for more than ten years; an enduring legacy of the White Australia policy. Applying his embodied lens as a former refugee to the circumstances of broader displacement of Indigenous and minoritised peoples of Central Asia, Elyas reveals the marked similarities in the historical treatment and contemporary experience of Hazara people in both Afghanistan and Australia.

Student Questions and Prompts

- Reflect on Rumi's poetry that Elyas has used in his installation:
Cheshme-e jaan چشمه جان (*The Spirit Spring*) 2023.

جان من از جان تو چیزی شنود

چون دلم از چشمه تو آب خورد

*My soul heard something from yours
Since my heart drank from your spring*

- In your own words describe the different layers of meaning that are evoked in this poetry and its relationship with the concepts, histories and intentions that Elyas has embedded in this installation. In your response consider:
 - the choice of the blue painted background wall,
 - the circular formation of the installation of the rehals,
 - why the accents have been left off the Persian/Dari letters in the photographic collages?
 - why the traditional Afghanistan rehal is referenced in this installation?
 - what are the social values depicted in this installation?
- Re-read Rumi's poetry and reflecting on Elyas' installation describe:
 - Whose soul heard something from 'yours' and what might that 'something' refer to?
- How has Elyas' cultural and social personal experience influenced the different meanings in this installation?

Right:

Elyas Alavi

Cheshme-e jaan چشمه جان (*The Spirit Spring*) 2023

installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Andrew Curtis



Artist & Key Artwork: Hoda Afshar

Invested in capturing intangible cultural memory and commenting on the accumulation of power both spiritual and political, artist and educator Dr Hoda Afshar presents a multi-layered wall assemblage from her *Speak the Wind* series, 2015–21. Emerging from her time in the islands of the Strait of Hormuz where she has travelled for many years both before and since living in Australia, the installation comprises of images of veneration by local collaborators, fabric moving in the winds, poetic or religious inscriptions in Persian language, a crimson tide coming into shore, and large natural sand/rock formations in the dry environment of these islands. The series, and this installation in particular, offers a portrait of the possessing wind and the physical experience of being possessed, which is often associated with these storied places. For Hoda, this honouring of the spiritual protection practices of the deeply cosmopolitan communities result from ‘many centuries of cultural and economic exchange, the traces of which are seen not only in the material culture of these islands but also in the customs and beliefs of their inhabitants’.

The abolition of slavery in Persia, which only occurred in 1929, created a deep structural racism against Afrodescendant peoples of contemporary southern Iran and neighbouring countries. That the spiritual world of African diasporic communities has prevailed, despite the fall and rise of absolute monarchist, democratic nationalist, and republican Islamic regimes in Iran, is testament to their tenacity. Echoing reverence for winds of differing character spanning this planet, local beliefs and ritual practices uphold a safe distance between human beings and winds who ‘may possess a person, causing her to experience illness or disease.’ To placate the wind’s harmful effects and negotiate its departure, a hereditary spiritual leader combines incense, music, and movement to communicate with the winds through the afflicted person in the language most linked to the elemental force. The striking sands, soils, sunlight, fabrics, skins, and spiritual gestures in Hoda’s imagery make evident a significant long-term relationship of careful navigation of these storied places.



Hoda Afshar
Speak the Wind 2015–21
wallpaper, projection, photographs
dimensions variable
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiysi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane
Photo: Andrew Curtis



Hoda Afshar
Speak the Wind 2015–21
 Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane



Student Questions and Prompts

- Hoda has described how she has sought to make the invisible visible in relation to the histories and the wind that are referenced in this installation. Reflect on the text and images in this installation and outline how Hoda made visible these stories of the wind and their effects on these places and their inhabitants.
- Hoda has described how she departs from traditional forms of photographic documentation. For her, it was important that she spent time on the islands of the Strait of Hormuz which saw her collaborate with the locals in the making of this body of work. Why do you think this methodology is important for the *Speak the Wind* series?

Artist & Key Artwork: Torika Bolatagici

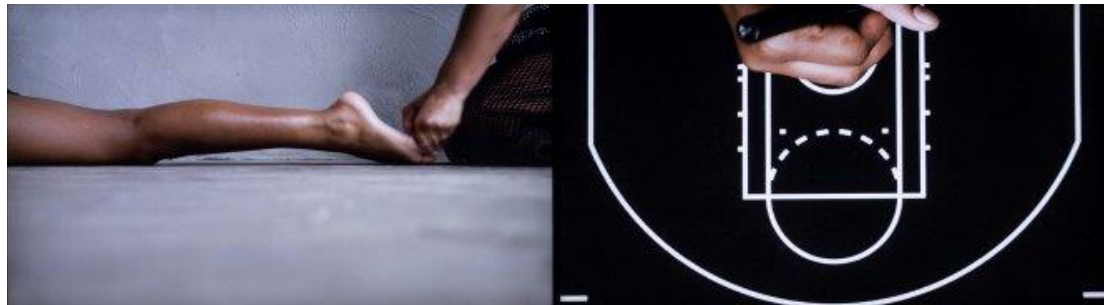
Value Form, 2023, by Dr Torika Bolatagici is a deeply moving meditation on the politics and histories imbued in experiences of Black athleticism today. This two-channel work combines scenes of mapping out game play from above in black and white, closeup footage of the artist's daughters' movements on a basketball court, and in motion capture renditions. Their repetitions, such as hands dribbling or dunking an implied, invisible ball, are learned strategies. In light of Torika's daughters' ties to Ono and Beqa islands in the Fijian archipelago, Gunantuna homelands in eastern New Britain island in Papua New Guinea as well as lutruwita (Tasmania), their physical prowess can be read with much more consideration than the cursory appreciation, often repeated in Australian society, of how Islanders from the Great Ocean excel in sport. Torika's latest work investigates the structural dynamics that create the socio-political conditions that lead to the disposability and indispensability of Black bodies, often as a form of monolithic objecthood which reduces and dehumanises. Deeply complex, transnational frameworks of racialisation are her focus. The origins of basketball are here less important than the societal attitudes that are imposed on young Black women athletes before they even arrive on court. This is further conveyed by the video's inclusion of excerpts from an interview with the American poet Claudia Rankine in which she discusses how epigenetic stress is passed on in DNA from African American mother to child.

Nevertheless, Torika deftly visualises the possibility of agency despite prejudice for her daughters. The artist confirms that the physicality of ceremonial performance and sport are connected, stating that:

Like the structured geometry of meke, basketball can be understood as a set of complex constellations of combative movement. Repetitive choreography and prescriptive drills become body knowledge, embedded deep in the memory of fast twitch muscle fibres.

Host to large Afrodescendent communities, it bears reminding that, unlike in the Americas, Indigeneity and Bla(c)kness are one and the same in Great Ocean cultures. In *Value Form*, the motion

capture figures that both daughters transform into could be seen as further kin constellations for spectral presences that their movement conjures. Equally, they echo iTaukei Viti motifs from visual and embodied cultural practices including masi, veiqa, and celestial navigation. The footage of Torika massaging her daughter's calves invokes Fijian cultural values which hold the human calf as an indicator of fitness and capacity for hard tasks.



Torika Bolatagici
Value Form 2023 (video stills)
two-channel HD video, sound, motion capture animation
video duration 00:07:00
Direction, cinematography, sound and editing: Torika Bolatagici
Movement director: Laura-Unise Coriakula
Motion capture animation: Patrick Hamilton (Kaleido)
Courtesy of the artist

This project is supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund.



Torika Bolatagici
Value Form 2023 (video still)
 Courtesy of the artist

Student Questions and Prompts

- What are the layers of prejudices and challenges that Torika's daughters experience before they even step onto the basketball court that are explicitly and implicitly depicted in *Value Form*?
- What values and beliefs underpin Torika's artwork?
- What is Torika encouraging the audience to consider/reflect on/challenge in their own beliefs and values?

Artist & Key Artwork: Sancintya Mohini Simpson



Sancintya Mohini Simpson
An ocean 2023
clay lotas fired in sugarcane and sawdust, sugarcane ash, sound
dimensions variable
Ceramics made with Miri Badger,
with assistance from Ben Leadbetter
and katnancy, and support from
Effie Skoufa-Klesnik
Sound: Isha Ram Das
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Sancintya Mohini Simpson's Ancestors were taken from Chennai (Madras), India, and made indentured labourers on the sugarcane plantations in Natal colony (now KwaZuluNatal state, South Africa). Through her works she renders intergenerational accounts that redress archival absence, and racial, gendered, and caste asymmetries. Tragically the indentured labour system replaced formal enslavement after slavery was 'abolished' in 1833 in the British Empire, leading to 1.3 million South Asians from pre-independence/partition India being transported across vast distances from 1834 to 1917, to sugarcane plantations in South Africa, Mauritius, the Caribbean colonies, and Fiji. This was echoed in the abduction into indenture of 62,500 Indigenous peoples from across southwest and central Great Ocean archipelagos, onto Queensland and New South Wales plantations and into Peruvian mines.

The complex nexus of migration, memory, trauma, silence and hauntings within a matrilineal prism, finds form in *An ocean*, 2023, an achingly beautiful assembly of black clay lotas fired in sugarcane and sawdust, laid on a bed of sugarcane ash. The vessels are accompanied by a recording of the artist exhaling deeply, which she describes as 'an attempt to imitate undulating ocean waves, and a release, meditation, acknowledgement.'

The black tones in *An ocean* not only gesture to the *kālā pani* ancestral 'black waters' or ocean voyages, but also to the dark history and residue of the sugar industry. The smooth lines on these vessels symbolise the continuing trauma held across generations in relation to sugar. While fragmented in time and geography, these histories reach almost every warm coast on this planet, and demand deep remembrance and healing.

Right:

Sancintya Mohini Simpson

An ocean 2023

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Photo: Andrew Curtis

Student Questions and Prompts

- Reflect on the inherent properties of the materials and techniques that Sancintya has used in *An ocean*. What is the significance of the choice of materials used in this artwork?
- How is Simpson experimenting with traditional and contemporary materials, techniques and processes in her art forms to communicate her ideas and meanings?
- Compare and contrast the meanings in the artworks *An ocean* with Hoda Afshar's *Speak the Wind*. What do these artworks have in common and what are the differences in the ideas and concepts that are being expressed and explored?
- What do Elyas's work *Cheshme-e jaan* چشمه جان (*The Spirit Spring*) and *An ocean* have in common?
- Reflect and analyse the different approaches and intentions these two artists have in their portrayal of historical and contemporary experiences.



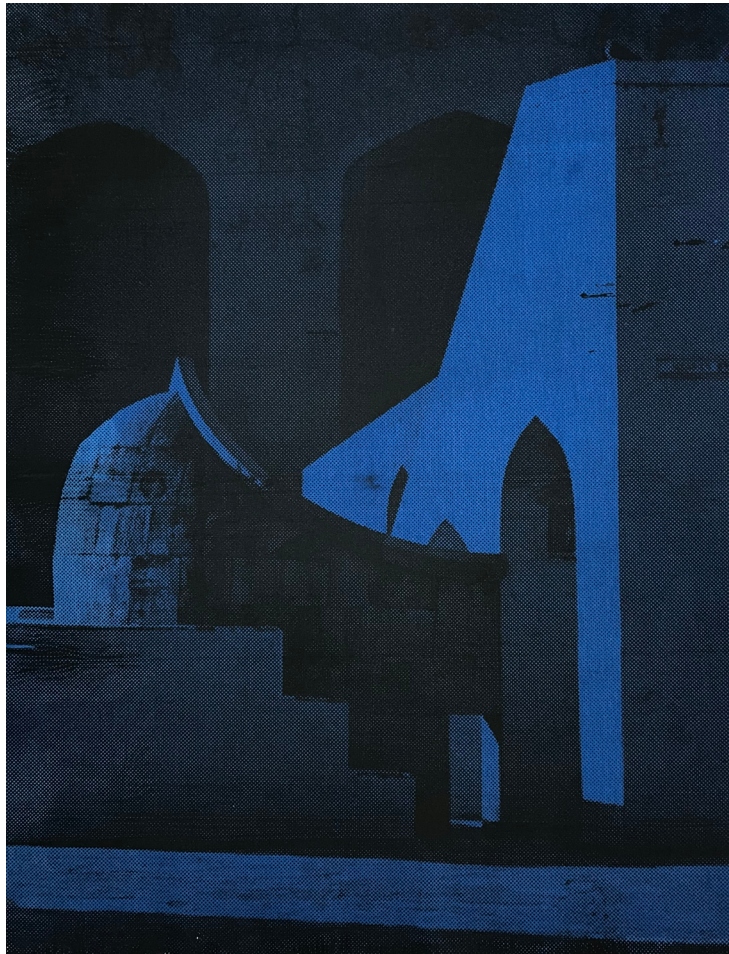
Artist & Key Artworks: David Sequeira

Artist and curator Dr David Sequeira's wall-based installation comprises two works: *Looking to the stars for answers*, 2023, an extensive silk-screened calico wall covering, and *You and I, we're like diamonds in the sky (after Rihanna)*, 2023, a suite of 16 miniature paintings of Sequeira and his partner set against a star-studded night. The anchor image applied across the wall depicts one of the observatory towers at the Jantar Mantar, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Jaipur, India. Commissioned by Maharaja Jai Singh II between 1724–1735, the Jantar Mantar can still be used to observe and measure planetary movements from specific locations across northern India. As David points out, these structures, a confluence of astrology and astronomy, were designed to immerse and suspend the observer, seemingly 'within the endless velvety ocean of the night sky.'

David has worked with Rajasthani miniaturists since the mid-1990s, articulating his queer embodiment and plural histories by combining their signature imagery with references to minimalism and pop art. This process provides David with a delicate way of navigating spaces of religious and cultural exclusion in both India and Australia. Purposefully making evident the connections between terrestrial and celestial realms is an important aspect of David's practice. He applies this framework to his most intimate relationships, particularly with his partner Ben, and his work can be understood as an affirmation of interwoven 'histories, cultures, timelines and geographies that will always be bigger than us.' Embellished with Swarovski crystals, the portraits of David feature his zodiac sign Pisces, the portraits of his partner Ben hold Aquarius in glistening form, and the couple portraits host the conjunction of both in a literal reference to queer placehood in the stars and to pop icon Rihanna.



David Sequeira
You and I, we're like diamonds in the sky (after Rihanna) 2023
gouache on board, Swarovski crystals
16 panels, 36 x 26 cm each
Looking to the stars for answers 2023
silkscreen on calico
dimensions variable
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'savili*
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Andrew Curtis



Student Questions and Prompts

- Why do you think David has represented the image of the Jantar Mantar in a similar Pop Art format used by Andy Warhol in this installation?
- David has worked with Rajasthani traditional miniaturist painters to depict the intimate relationship he has with his partner Ben. The current perspectives in India are divided in the representation of queer identity in contemporary culture. How do you think David is responding to this issue in his artworks *You and I, we're like diamonds in the sky (after Rihanna)*, 2023, and *Looking to the stars for answers*, 2023?
- David draws together the celestial and terrestrial realms, the micro and the macro, in his art practice. How does this artwork address these connections?
- David incorporates multiple references to traditional and contemporary cultures in his artwork, including the titles he gives the works and the materials and techniques he uses. List these different references and share your interpretation and evaluation of the meanings these references provide for an audience.

Above Left and Right:

David Sequeira

You and I, we're like diamonds in the sky (after Rihanna) 2023 and
Looking to the stars for answers 2023

installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'av'asavili*

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Andrew Curtis

Artist & Key Artwork: Phuong Ngo



Phuong Ngo
Remastered 2023
wood, nails, glue, synthetic polymer paint
dimensions variable
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: ua usiui fa'ava'asavili
Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne
Photo: Andrew Curtis

This project has been supported by the Georges Mora Fellowship; the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria and assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Remastered is an artwork by Phuong Ngo that literally and metaphorically dismantles the racialised underpinnings of white Australia. For this project, the artist sourced and pulled apart furniture dating from pre-1963 that had been labelled, by law, with the racist phrase 'European Labour Only'. Ngo then reassembled these various pieces of furniture into fictional art objects in the form of a series of white plinths. One piece of furniture remains and is exhibited here with the text that recently accompanied it on Facebook Marketplace. This text shows how these racist attitudes persist today. In this work, the artist is centring his own labour in addressing the historical exclusion and discrimination against 'People of Colour'.

Set out in the Victorian Factories and Shops Act 1896, the 'European Labour Only' stamp was a legal requirement for furniture produced in Victoria. Similar laws were enacted across Australia during this period and was perfectly complimented by the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act (White Australia policy) upon federation. A racially superior piece of furniture made by the best hands; the whitest hands; by 'European Labour Only' was contrasted with the 'inferior' furniture made by those forced to stamp their wears with 'Asiatic Labour' or 'Chinese Labour', designed to support and protect the buyer. These laws came into effect to protect the everyday white consumer rights and were abolished in 1963 only a decade before the dismantling of the White Australia policy.

In this first iteration of the project, the work responds to the context of TarraWarra Museum of Art, and museums more generally, through the artist's ironic use of the British Paints colour 'White Comfort'. By creating these works, Ngo aims to speak to the structural and hidden forms of racism that exist in institutions.

Right:

Phuong Ngo
Remastered 2023
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Student Questions and Prompts

- Phuong is addressing institutional racism in art institutions in this installation *Remastered*, 2023. Why do you think he has transformed furniture labelled with 'European Labour Only' into white museum plinths that reference museum display furniture and minimalist art?
- Why has he chosen to paint the plinths in the British Paints colour 'White Comfort'?
- In what ways do you think museums have prejudiced artists of colour compared to artists of European ancestry? Who is represented in a museum and who is excluded?
- What are the mediums and techniques that Phuong has used in this installation? List them and reflect on how the process and materials used to make this work offer a critique of racist laws, attitudes and practices.



Artist & Key Artwork: Abdul-Rahman Abdullah



Abdul-Rahman Abdullah

Tanpa Sempadan 2023

carved Jelutong wood and glass

35 x 270 x 115 cm

installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*

Courtesy of the artist and Moore Contemporary, Perth

Photo: Andrew Curtis

This project has been supported by the Department of Local Government,
Sports and Cultural Industries, Government of Western Australia.

A physical manifestation of cultural ties to the Sungai Linggi region where the artist's maternal kampung is located in Malaysia, *Tanpa Sempadan* powerfully embodies humanity's histories with saltwater crocodiles, shapeshifting entities rich in status and prowess. In Bahasa Malay, tanpa sempadan means 'without borders', and in depictions of the saltwater crocodile in the visual cultures of neighbouring regions, their many forms and faces are demonstrative of a supremely borderless way of existing on this watery planet.

Reflecting on his travels to Kampung Linggi, which is home to one of the few remaining crocodile populations in the Malay peninsula, Abdul-Rahman shares: 'There seemed to be a casual brutality to their presence, swimming was fun, being dismembered by an apex predator was not. I imagined the vigilance it would take to enjoy the water and decided that I'd never test it.' In this large-scale, intricately carved sculpture, the artist brings into being a sense of awe and veneration for this more-than-human kin.

Abdul-Rahman is quick to observe that the crocodile cunning that its domination presupposes, has poignant equivalences: 'For over 200 million years they have occupied the top of the food chain with a territorial violence that parallels our own. We see the best and worst of ourselves in that intractable presence'.



Abdul-Rahman Abdullah, *Tanpa Sempadan* 2023
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist and Moore Contemporary, Perth
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Student Questions and Prompts

- Why do you think Abdul has titled this sculpture *Tanpa Sempadan*, which translates into English as 'without borders'?
- Compare and contrast the ideas, reflections and mythologies in Abdul-Rahman Abdullah's *Tanpa Sempadan* and Kirsten Lyttle's *taniwha (water monster)* series 2022–2023.
- What are the similarities and differences between these two artworks.
- Consider the different materials and processes these two artists have used in their artworks and analyse how these materials and processes influence the audience's interpretation of the artworks.
- Abdul has been commissioned to create this artwork for this Biennial using traditional carving practices. What makes this artwork a contemporary artwork?

Artist & Key Artwork: Leyla Stevens



Leyla Stevens
GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda) 2023 (video still)
fibre, HD single channel video, surround sound
video duration 00:28:00
Courtesy of the artist

This work is co-commissioned by TarraWarra Museum of Art and the University of Queensland Art Museum.
This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.
This project is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

Produced in Gadigal Country, as well as in the forests, temples and shores of Bali, *GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda)*, 2023, by artist and educator Dr Leyla Stevens, is a 28-minute single-channel HD film. Working in expanded documentary, Leyla's film focuses on the deity Rangda and her leyaks/lēaks (disciples), represented by five dancers, figures who hold pride of place in Balinese cosmogony. Channelling Rangda's recognised capacity as a powerful shapeshifter, *GROH GOH* counters 'sustained interpretations from colonial and touristic frameworks' to propose a transformative matrilineal lens on Balinese visual culture and art history.

Moving between lush-forested shores and sites of pilgrimage on Nusa Penida and a Wantilan (rehearsal pavilion) in Bali, Leyla takes the viewer on a journey into some of the registers of the Calonarang theatrical drama, restaging its traditional form as a scripted performance. At one point in the film, the voice-over narration in Bahasa Indonesia, and mantra spoken in Balinese Kawi, speaks at length about searching for and yet evading Rangda throughout her home cultural geography. Here, the islands of Bali themselves seem to be the ones asking what Rangda might look like in human imaginaries: Eyes like twin suns? An unparalleled rage, sharpened by fangs?

Poignantly, the voice-over extends the existential request to contemporary Balinese people to consider Rangda as an everyday human being. No longer beyond comprehension in the realm of divinities, but present, reflected in the movement phrases of the dancers who alternate the ritualised attacking and carrying of victims with gestures that consider Rangda's fullness as both forlorn widow and doting mother. Towards the middle of the film, the leyaks/lēaks discuss Rangda's symbolism as a manifestation of both the goddess Durga and the god Shiva. With distinct dances requiring masculine or feminine bodies, they question whether gender applies to Rangda: 'Actually, Rangda has no fixed gender. Because what's being shown is their [the deity's] power.' Considering the potential to harness Rangda's black magic while veneration shots pan across trees and streams, provides a prism through which to approach Balinese visuality and orality from within. In emulating the contours of lands, waters and skies, the leyaks/lēaks shift and transpose Rangda into new forms, bringing new perspectives to their disciples and people today.

The film is announced by beautiful, dual-layered flowing lengths of dried prasok which represent Rangda's long, matted hair, spilling into the space of the gallery.

Student Questions and Prompts

In your responses, please refer to the image on the back cover of this kit and to the images on p.24-25.

- How does this artwork reflect the beliefs, values, traditions and practices of historical and contemporary Balinese culture?
- Why do you think three of the artists in this exhibition are referencing beings that are shapeshifters?
- What do these three artworks all have in common and how do they relate to the meaning of the exhibition's title *ua usiisi fa'ava'asavili*, a Sāmoan proverb meaning 'the canoe obeys the wind'?



Leyla Stevens
GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda) 2023 (video still)
Courtesy of the artist

Artist & Key Artwork: Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
Ngugi Quandamooka
Ngumpi (Home) 2022–23
ungaire, driftwood, talwalpin, kowinka-dyed silk and cotton, shells, string and ghost net
dimensions variable
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artists and Onespace Gallery, Brisbane
Photo: Andrew Curtis



Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael
 Ngugi Quandamooka
Ngumpi (Home) 2022–23
 installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
 Courtesy of the artists and Onespace Gallery, Brisbane
 Photo: Andrew Curtis

For this Biennial, Ngugi Quandamooka mother-daughter duo Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael have crafted *Ngumpi (Home)*, 2022–23, a sublime installation that affirms and strengthens the manifestations of their spiritual connections to Ancestors, and the sea and land more broadly. Equally, the work champions the sovereign balance of relationships between humans, more-than-human-kin, and their archipelagic homelands, especially Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) and Mulgumpin (Moreton Island).

Composed of cherished endemic ungaire (freshwater reed), tawalpin (cotton tree) bark, driftwood, shells, string, and kowinka (mangrove tree)-dyed silk fabric, *Ngumpi (Home)* is a generous invitation to witness the strength of Quandamooka kin constellations. Over a year ago, a group of artists, curators and marine biologists including Sonja and husband Glynn Carmichael, spent time treading very lightly in the intertidal zones, awash with living beings and storied places, flowing out from Capemba or Myora Springs into Quandamooka, the great bay. Inspired by the creation histories shared by the late great Quandamooka poet, activist, artist and educator Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Aunty Kath Walker, 1920–1993), Sonja and Elisa Jane have created gulayi (woven baskets) and mission baskets. The driftwood has been lovingly gathered from the beaches of Minjerribah by the artists as well as further Carmichael family members Glynn, designer Simon, and curator Freja. Over the ngumpi are draped multiple textiles dyed with the fibres and barks of Quandamooka Country, while woven flowers, baskets and a mat in tawalpin and ungaire surround this intimate scene, mirroring the intertidal zones where the Quandamooka have lived and thrived since forever.

Student Questions and Prompts

In your responses please refer to the image on the title page of this kit and the to the images above.

- Unbound Collective, Sancintya Mohini Simpson, Elyas Alavi and Sonja Carmichael and Elisa Jane Carmichael, have all referenced poetry in this exhibition. Why do you think the curator and these artists have written, incorporated or referenced poetry throughout this exhibition?

- Investigate, identify and evaluate the methods used and considerations involved in the presentation, conservation and care of *Ngumpi*—which has been created using organic natural materials—while on display in an exhibition space. What conservation issues do you imagine have been addressed with this artwork/installation?
- *Ngumpi* expresses the artists' strong ancestral lineage and connections to Country and culture. The work also speaks to the evolution and transformation of cultural practices and the ongoing survival and restitution of cultural practices. The installation also demonstrates the revival of weaving practices through a matrilineal interchange of techniques, knowledge and materials. Why is intergenerational collaboration so important with traditional weaving practices?
- Why do you think the Carmichaels have included mission baskets in this installation?
- This installation has been described by the artists as a love story between the tawalpin (cotton tree) and kowinka (mangrove tree). Explain in your own words why the artists have described this installation in this way.

Artist & Key Artwork: Vicky West



Vicky West
trawlwoolway
kalikina brayly 2023
HD video, kalikina brayly strands
video duration 00:01:21,
kalikina dimensions variable
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Andrew Curtis



Vicki West
 trawlwoolway
kalikina brayly 2023
 installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiwi fa'ava'asavili*
 Courtesy of the artist
 Photo: Andrew Curtis

Vicki West is a proud pakana artist of the trawlwoolway people from the northeast coast region of lutruwita (Tasmania). Having worked with kalikina (bull kelp) over many years, including making rikawa (water carriers), *kalikina brayly*, 2023, Vicki's TarraWarra offering, is an immersive invitation that, as she expresses, 'carries my concern for milaythina/muka country/ sea' while celebrating survival and cultural continuity. The coiled, rising form honours the continuing importance of creating carefully, relationally, with kalikina, which has been weakened and threatened in recent years by warming currents. Vicki describes kalikina as dancing and weaving through natural flows that are intrinsically connected to pakana people, to whom it is then gifted; a vital lesson in life cycles and sovereign balance.

Student Questions and Prompts

- Analyse and interpret the expression and meaning of the different art mediums and materials that West has used in this installation.
- How do you interpret the interplay between the video projection and the kalikina in this installation?

Artist & Key Artwork: Jenna Lee



Jenna Lee

Gulumerridjin, Wardaman, KarraJarri

to gather, to nourish, to sustain 2022–23

persimmon dyed, Awagami custom haruki-shi diamond white, sumi, Gulumerridjin garramal-wa (Larrakia white ochre), Nikawa, bookbinding linen

48 parts, 53 x 74 cm each

installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiusi fa'ava'asavili*

Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Melbourne

Photo: Andrew Curtis

Gulumerridjin (Larrakia), Wardaman, KarraJarri, Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and English artist and designer Jenna Lee's large installation *to gather, to nourish, to sustain*, 2023, is the culmination of years of research-creation into objects that embody Gulumerridjin language out of the absences and presences in colonial archives. In this installation, Jenna has crafted three dilly bags and 48 works on diamond-shaped Awagami custom haruki-shi paper which bear verbs interpreted as painted images.

This represents the latest expansion of her practice of making Ancestral Belongings from museum collections and colonial dictionaries. Painted with pigments, these works are translations beyond a colonial reference, demonstrating what Jenna calls 'the absolute connectedness between our objects and our ecology.'

The installation's title refers to the verb preference of Western linguists when asking Ancestors about the dilly bag as a form. The extensive kin constellation of Gulumerridjin terms rendered in these diamonds is testament to the power of restitution aesthetics; more than symbols representing verbs and nouns, these images are replete with vibrant Indigenous language and life.

Student Questions and Prompts

- **Analyse, interpret and explain how Lee weaves her cultural backgrounds intricately into this installation? Consider the configuration and layout of the installation and the materials and techniques that have been used.**
- **As Jenna describes, this installation uses 'the shapes, forms and grids already present' in Gulumerridjin visual language'. How does her use of language in this artwork contrast to a colonial methodology or approach in compiling dictionaries?**
- **Lee has pulped up pages of Gulumerridjin language compiled in colonial dictionaries and created dilly bags incorporating the same colours as the Awagami custom haruki-shi papers. Why do you think she has made these choices and how do you interpret the meanings conveyed in the decisions she made to create this installation?**



Jenna Lee
Gulumerridjin, Wardaman, KarraJarri
to gather, to nourish, to sustain 2022–23
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua usiisi fa'ava'asavili*
Courtesy of the artist and MARS Gallery, Melbourne
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Artist & Key Artwork: Bhenji Ra



Bhenji Ra
Trade Routes 2023 (video still)
single channel HD video
video duration 00:32:00
Editors: Bhenji Ra and Jen Atherton
Producer: André Shannon
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Artist, choreographer and mother of the House of Slé, Bhenji Ra has many strings to her bow. Her 32-minute film *Trade Routes*, 2023, poetically gathers phone footage gathered across recent years of living, learning, working and sojourning in Wurrumiyanga, Tiwi Islands, Davao, Philippines, Oaxaca, Mexico, Kingston, Jamaica, and Tongva (Los Angeles), California. A reactivation of ancient trade routes, this latest work by Bhenji is a personal visual archive that functions as an anthology of connection and memory.

A literal trans cartography of kin across countries, the work is part of an 'accidental archival practice' embedded within, and so, responsive to, and responsible for, multiple kin constellations across tropical and equatorial geographies and performance lineages. In this work, food or weaving preparation sequences combine with scenes of night markets, firestick farming, dance rehearsals and lessons, airport and plane outtakes, and footage of multiple choreographic phrases being learnt and performed. This is a choreography of the politics of refusal and the right to opacity: many bodies co-create these images that both protect and create a webbing of trans relationality. Spiralling, slicing, images become fluid sequences; what is covered becomes uncovered, offering both distance and intimacy. In *Trade Routes*, the gestures, the voices, the dances, the personalities, mirror and coalesce across trans idiosyncrasies, trans verses, trans oceans, in the Americas, Philippines, Australia, and beyond.

Right:
Bhenji Ra
Trade Routes 2023 (video still)
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Andrew Curtis

Student Questions and Prompts

- Bhenji is the mother of the House of Slé. Research what the purpose and significance of the 'house' is in trans culture.

Bhenji invites us to understand the cultures, gestures, song, dances, stories, experiences that are shared by trans communities throughout the world. *Trade Routes* gathers together video footage of her global travels and her personal experiences of connecting with trans communities. However, these video clips are spliced together in a way that makes some of the imagery difficult to see or register.

- Why do you think Bhenji is obscuring this imagery?
- Explore Bhenji's use of smart phone footage to create the work *Trade Routes* 2023. How has the use of this technology aided in the creation of this work? If an alternate form of technology or media was used, how may this have altered the creative process of the artist?



Artist & Key Artwork: Kirsten Lyttle



Kirsten Lyttle

Waikato: Ngāti Tahinga, Tainui A Whiro

taniwha (water monster) series 2022–2023

Very Like a Whale 1886 2023

The Taniwha Again 1886 2023

That Sea Serpent 1891 2023

Taniwha Rears Head in Ngawha Prison Hearing 2002 2023

Native Braves Taniwha 1932 2023

The Taniwha 1895 2023

Weird Calls to Auckland Council Hotline 2019 2023

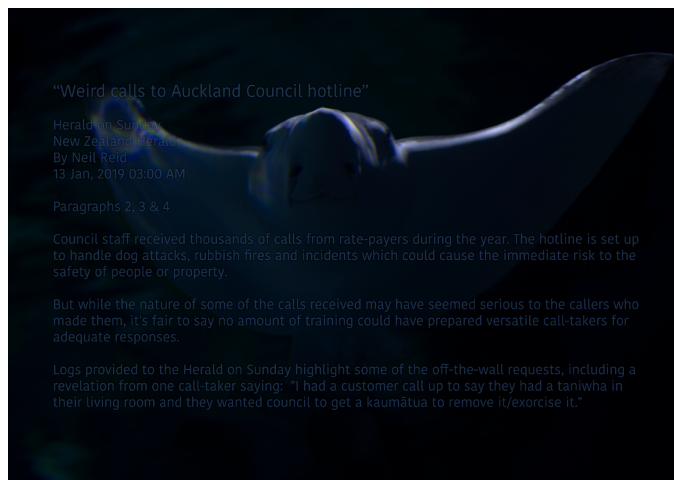
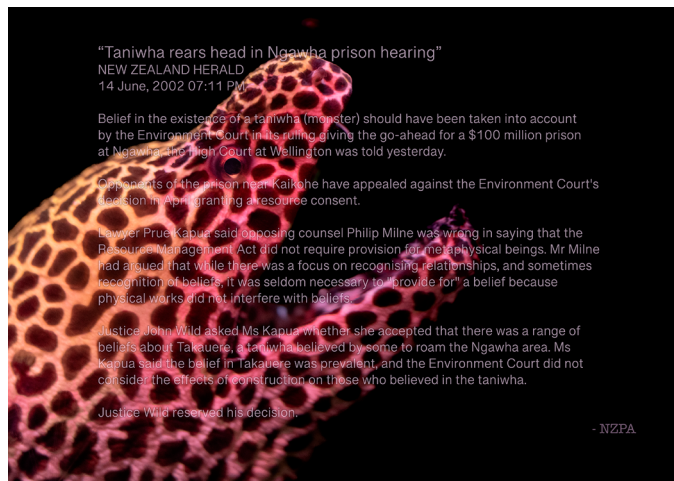
installation view, TarraWarra Biennial 2023: *ua ususi fa'ava'asavili*

archival pigment inks on Hahnemühle Monet canvas

58.5 x 82 cm each

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: Andrew Curtis



Kirsten Lyttle
Waikato: Ngāti Tahinga, Tainui A Whiro
Taniwha Rears Head in Ngawha Prison Hearing 2002 2023
Weird Calls to Auckland Council Hotline 2019 2023
archival pigment ink on Hahnemühle Monet canvas
58.5 x 82 cm each
Courtesy of the artist

Māori-Australian artist and scholar Dr Kirsten Lyttle works to disassemble the colonial hold on Indigenous bodies, belongings and knowledges. For this Biennial, Kirsten has created *taniwha (water monster)*, 2023, a series of photographic and text-based works. In te reo Māori, the term taniwha signifies many things: 'water spirit, monster, dangerous water creature, powerful creature, chief, powerful leader, something or someone awesome ... They are often regarded as guardians by the people who live in their territory, but may also have a malign influence on human beings.'

Combining found newspaper articles of reported taniwha sightings dating between 1886 and 2019 with photographs of 'potential taniwha,' Kirsten's series demonstrates that the 'murky and opaque' nature of taniwha should not lead to naive or dismissive attitudes. She is adamant that 'to view taniwha as mythological' is naive, particularly in 'an age of rising sea levels, volcanic eruptions, and pandemics.' Instead, to recognise taniwha as shapeshifting entities which humans must respect through continuing cultural protocols in both Aotearoa and Australia, brings an understanding of different responsibilities for different witnesses to taniwha.

Student Questions and Prompts

- What does Lyttle mean that it would be naïve for humans to treat Taniwha just as a myth given the increasing climate emergencies that are occurring globally?
- What awareness is Lyttle encouraging the audience to consider in relation to the preservation and reparation of our global shared waterways, particularly in the shared rivers, oceans and streams between Australia and Aotearoa?

Lyttle has referenced historical and contemporary archives to communicate her ideas in this artwork.

- Consider, analyse and interpret the choices the artist has made for the size of the images, their spacing, and the interplay of text and images.
- This exhibition highlights how many cultures consider animals and plants as more-than-human kin. How is this different to Western relationships to animal and plant kin and what can these perspectives teach us about humility, and living more harmoniously and sustainably on this planet?

Support Materials

Links:

<https://www.twma.com.au/exhibitions/tarrawarra-biennial-2023-ua-usiusi-faavaasavili/>

Curriculum Links

VICTORIAN CURRICULUM

VISUAL ARTS

VCE – ART MAKING AND EXHIBITING

Unit 1: Explore, expand and investigate

Area of Study 1

Explore – materials, techniques and art forms

How do artists use materials and techniques in their art making?

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to explore the characteristics and properties of materials and demonstrate how they can be manipulated to develop subject matter and represent ideas in art making.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key Knowledge

- the use of materials, techniques and processes in the historical development of art forms
- the inherent characteristics and properties of materials
- understanding of technical skills when using materials and techniques in art making
- the manipulation of materials and use of techniques to develop subject matter and represent ideas in art making
- the use of materials and techniques to develop visual language in art making

- methods used to document and organise written and visual reference materials
- the use of visual language and art terminology to reflect on and document art making

Key Skills

- investigate the use of materials, techniques and processes in the historical development of specific art forms
- investigate the characteristics and properties of materials in art making in specific art forms
- develop and apply technical skills when using materials and techniques in art making in specific art forms
- explore how materials can be manipulated to develop subject matter and represent ideas in art making
- research how artists manipulate materials to develop subject matter and represent ideas in art making
- explore materials and techniques to develop visual language in art making
- progressively document the development of art making in a Visual Arts journal
- use visual language and art terminology to reflect on and document art making

Area of Study 3

Investigate – research and present

What role do artworks and their presentation play in society?

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to research Australian artists and present information about them in a format appropriate for a proposed exhibition.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 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

Understand – ideas, artworks and exhibition

How are thematic exhibitions planned and designed?

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to select a range of artworks from an exhibition and other sources to design their own thematic exhibition.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 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 1

Collect – inspirations, influences and images

How do artists use selected art forms and ideas to create visual language?

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to collect information from artists and artworks in specific art forms to develop subject matter and ideas in their own art making.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key Knowledge

- the use of art elements, art principles and aesthetic qualities in artworks in specific art forms
- how subject matter and ideas are developed from artistic influences, inspirations and personal experiences
- methods used to communicate ideas using visual language
- the inherent characteristics and properties of materials used in experimentation and art making in specific art forms
- techniques and processes used in art making in specific art forms

- methods used to conceptualise artworks and document individual art making
- art terminology in the documentation and evaluation of art making

Key Skills

- explore, evaluate and document the use of art elements, art principles and aesthetic qualities in specific art forms
- develop subject matter and ideas from the exploration of artistic influences, inspiration and personal experiences
- experiment with materials, techniques and processes in art making in specific art forms
- document the development of ideas and visual language in individual artworks in specific art forms
- identify and analyse the connections between influences, sources of inspiration and personal experiences
- identify, analyse and evaluate the characteristics and properties of materials used in experimentation and art making in specific art forms
- identify, analyse and evaluate the use of techniques and processes in specific art forms
- identify, analyse and evaluate the use of visual language in artworks
- conceptualise artworks and document, reflect on and evaluate individual art making in a Visual Arts journal
- use art terminology in documentation, analysis and evaluation

Area of Study 3

Connect – curate, design and propose

How are artworks selected and presented for exhibition?

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to research and plan an exhibition of the artworks of three artists. To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 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

What role does conservation and care have in the presentation of artworks?

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should understand the presentation, conservation and care of artworks, including the conservation and care of their own artworks.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

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

VCE – CREATIVE PRACTICE

Unit 1: Interpreting artworks and exploring the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1

Artists, artworks and audiences

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the practices of three artists, and apply the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to analyse and interpret one artwork by each artist.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

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

Area of Study 2

The Creative Practice

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to use the Creative Practice to develop and make visual responses informed by their exploration of personal interests and ideas.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key Knowledge

- methods used to experiment with and explore materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice
- ways to develop personal visual responses by investigating the practices of artists
- the use of visual language to communicate ideas of personal interest
- inherent properties of materials and their use in a range of art forms
- the use of materials, techniques and art forms to make personal visual responses
- ways the relationships between the artist, the artwork and the viewer or audience communicate meaning in artworks
- the use of the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to interpret meaning in visual responses

Key Skills

- experiment with and explore materials, techniques and processes using the Creative Practice

- investigate the practices of artists to develop personal visual responses
- use visual language to communicate ideas of personal interest
- explore and experiment with materials, techniques and processes in a range of art forms to make personal visual responses
- explore how the relationships between the artist, the artwork, and the viewer or audience communicate meaning in artworks
- apply the Structural Lens and the Personal Lens to interpret meaning in visual responses

Unit 2: Interpreting artworks and developing the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1

The artist, society and culture

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to use the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, to analyse and compare the practices of artists and artworks from different cultures and times.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

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

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to use the Creative Practice to explore social and cultural ideas or issues to make and present at least one finished artwork using collaborative approaches.

Area of Study 2

The collaborative Creative Practice

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

Key Knowledge

- the use of the Creative Practice to explore social and cultural ideas or issues
- the use of the Creative Practice to make and present at least one finished artwork
- collaborative approaches in art practices from different periods of time and cultures
- the use of visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest in visual responses
- the use of the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, throughout the Creative Practice
- the use of traditional and contemporary materials, techniques and processes in art forms to communicate ideas and meaning

Key Skills

- explore social and cultural ideas or issues using the Creative Practice
- make and present at least one finished artwork using the Creative Practice
- reflect on the collaborative practices of artists from different periods of time and cultures throughout the Creative Practice
- explore collaborative approaches to make and present artworks
- develop visual language to communicate ideas and issues of social and cultural interest in visual responses
- use the Cultural Lens, and the other Interpretive Lenses as appropriate, throughout the Creative Practice
- explore and experiment with traditional and contemporary materials, techniques and processes in art forms to communicate ideas and meaning

Unit 3: Investigation, ideas, artworks and the Creative Practice

Area of Study 1

Investigation and presentation: Research and exploration

Resolution, presentation and critique

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to develop personal ideas using research that examines one artwork and the practice of an artist, and produce at least one finished artwork using the Creative Practice.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key Knowledge

- ideas and related issues explored by artists in their artworks
- the use of selected materials, techniques, processes and art forms throughout the Creative Practice
- the ways visual language is used to communicate ideas or issues
- the use of materials, techniques and processes in art forms to develop effective visual language
- the selection of appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- methods used to document, reflect upon and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice to develop and refine artworks
- methods used to present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice and finished artworks

Key Skills

- research and analyse the ideas explored by artists in their artworks
- research and analyse issues related to the artwork or practice of the artist
- use selected materials, techniques, processes and art

forms throughout the Creative Practice

- develop and critically evaluate visual language to communicate ideas or issues
- explore and document the use of materials, techniques and processes to develop effective visual language
- select and apply the appropriate Interpretive Lenses throughout the Creative Practice
- explore, document, reflect on and evaluate the use of the Creative Practice to develop and refine an artwork, using appropriate written and visual material
- apply appropriate methods to present a critique of the use of the Creative Practice and the finished artworks

Unit 4: Interpreting, resolving and presenting artworks and the Creative Practice

Area of Study 3

Comparison of artists, their practice and their artworks

Outcome 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to compare the practices of historical and contemporary artists, and use the Interpretive Lenses to analyse and interpret the meanings and messages of selected artworks.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

Key Knowledge

- practices of historical and contemporary artists
- meanings and messages of historical and contemporary artworks
- the use of evidence from artworks to support analysis and interpretation
- the use of the Structural, Personal and Cultural Lenses to analyse and interpret historical and contemporary artworks
- resources to support the research of selected artists and their artworks
- art terminology used in the discussion and comparison of

the practices of artists and their artworks

Key Skills

- compare the practices of historical and contemporary artists
- analyse, interpret and compare meanings and messages of historical and contemporary artworks
- use a range of resources to compare the practices of historical and contemporary artists, and to analyse and interpret their artworks
- apply the Structural, Personal and Cultural Lenses to the analysis and interpretation of the meanings and messages of artworks
- substantiate the analysis and interpretation of artworks with evidence from the artworks and other sources
- use appropriate terminology and comparative language in the analysis, interpretation and comparison
- of the practices of artists and their artwork

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GROH GOH (Rehearsal for Rangda) 2023 (video still)

Courtesy of the artist

