

24th DOBELL Drawing Prize



Rosemary Lee, 24-1, 2024, pencil on paper

Education Kit

A National Art School Touring Exhibition

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SIR WILLIAM DOBELL
ART FOUNDATION

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Installation view, *24th Dobell Drawing Prize*, National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2025, image courtesy the artists and National Art School © the artists, photograph: Peter Morgan

Acknowledgement

The National Art School acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Owners on whose Country we meet, share and create. We pay our respects to all Gadigal Elders past and present. We celebrate the diversity, history, knowledge and creativity of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia.

Overview

This resource is written in line with the years 7–10 Visual Arts Syllabus and the Higher School Certificate Visual Arts Syllabus, as a guide to exploring the exhibition or as a pre/post visit resource. Tertiary students and the general public may also find the resource useful.

Teachers can use this resource to engage students in a critical appreciation of contemporary drawing. The resource encourages students to consider a range of expressive forms, themes, and genres which will inform their own artmaking.

Curriculum Links

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM VISUAL ARTS

Years 7–8
AC9AVA8E01
AC9AVA8D01
AC9AVA8D02

Years 9–10
AC9AVA10E01
AC9AVA10D01
AC9AVA10D02

NSW CURRICULUM VISUAL ARTS SYLLABUS

Stage 4	Stage 6
VA4-CHC-01	P7, P8, P9, P10
VA4-CHV-01	H7, H8, H9, H10
VA4-CHP-01	

Stage 5
VA5-CHC-01
VA5-CHV-01
VA5-CHP-01

Dobell Drawing Prize

Sir William Dobell's love of drawing was recognised in 1993 when the Art Gallery of New South Wales established an annual drawing prize in his name, initiated by the trustees of the Sir William Dobell Art Foundation (SWDAF). For twenty years, the annual Dobell Prize for Drawing encouraged excellence in drawing and draughtsmanship among Australian artists. Past winners include Kevin Connor, David Fairbairn, Virginia Grayson, Nicholas Harding, Ana Pollak, Gareth Sansom, Jan Senbergs AM, Garry Shead and Aida Tomescu.

Building on the legacy of this respected award, the National Art School (NAS) partnered with the SWDAF in 2019 to produce the biannual Dobell Drawing Prize. This new iteration of the Prize celebrates technical skill, innovation and expanded definitions of drawing. In 2019 the \$30,000 acquisitive prize was awarded to Justine Varga, in 2021 to Euan Macleod, in 2023 to Jane Grealy and in 2025 to Rosemary Lee.

The National Art School provides a context for the Dobell Drawing Prize to thrive in. The exhibition is part of the NAS Festival of Drawing, a biennial event organised by the School's National Centre for Drawing. The festival includes talks, workshops, and a research symposium. The Prize also compliments the School's esteemed academic drawing program: drawing is a core component of all studies at NAS and is taught throughout each degree.



Installation view, *24th Dobell Drawing Prize*, National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2025, image courtesy the artists and National Art School © the artists, photograph: Peter Morgan

Sir William Dobell KBE

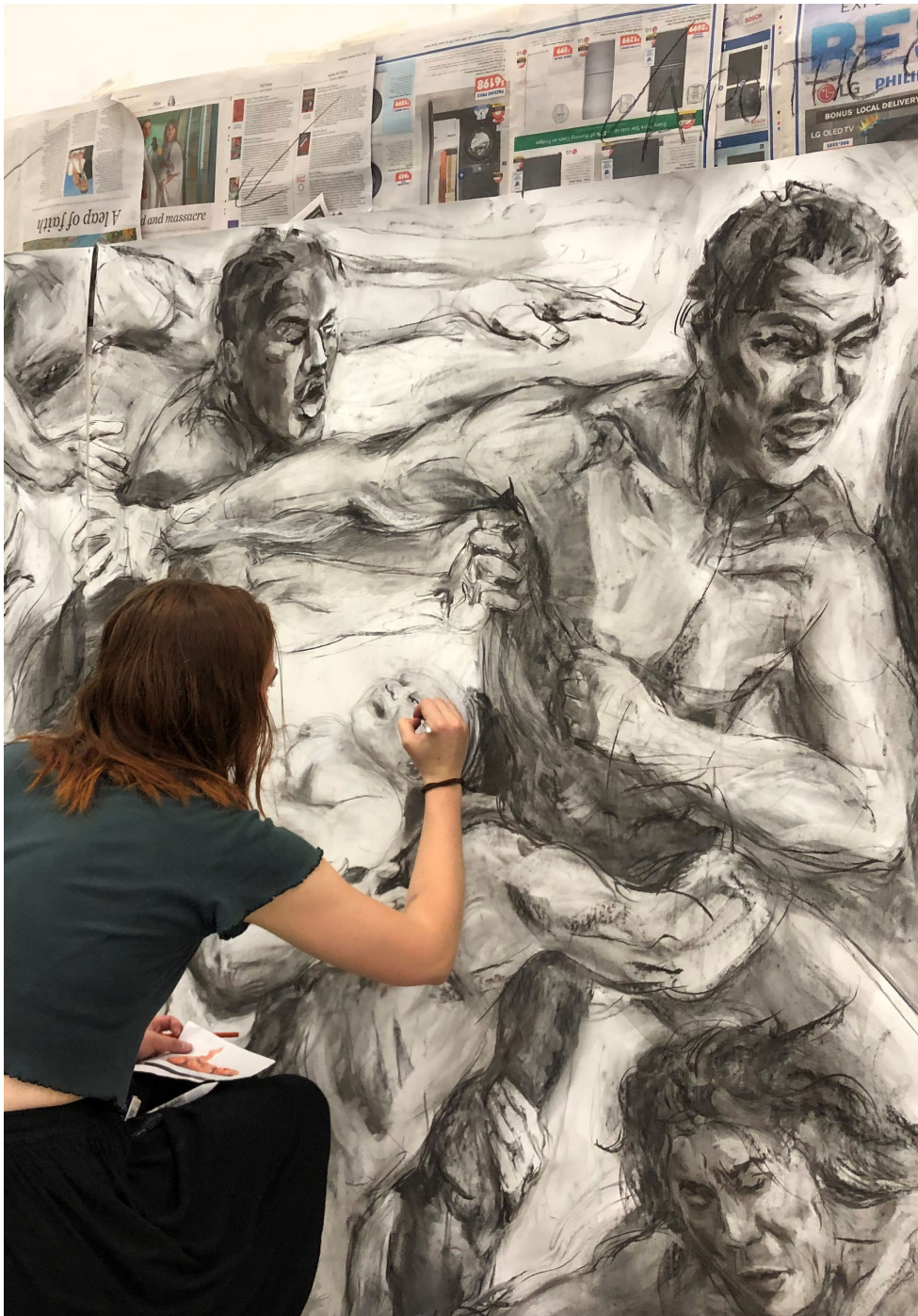
Although a reserved and unassuming man, Sir William Dobell's two years teaching at the National Art School had a profound effect on his students. Many describe his love for drawing, and his outstanding draughtsmanship was apparent when he demonstrated drawing in his classes at NAS.

William Dobell was born in Newcastle, New South Wales, on 24 September 1899. He moved to Sydney in 1924 to study at the Julian Ashton Art School, where he met many artists who would later teach at the National Art School (NAS). In 1929 he won the Society of Artists Travelling Scholarship and lived in London for ten years, painting and studying at the Slade School of Fine Art. When his scholarship ran out after three years, he supported himself by producing posters and illustrations for magazines, acting as an extra in films, and working with fellow Australian artists decorating the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow in 1937.

On his return to Sydney in 1939 his friend Douglas Dundas offered him a part time teaching position at East Sydney Technical College (now the National Art School). He taught drawing from nature, costume drawing and became highly respected as the 'life master', teaching life drawing in the studios. He taught at NAS until 1941, when he left to work as a camouflage artist during ww2. After the war, Dobell occasionally filled in as a lecturer at NAS, teaching the students studying there under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme.

In 1943 Dobell won the Archibald Prize, Australia's principal award for portraiture, for a painting of fellow artist and former NAS student Joshua Smith. The award was immediately challenged on the grounds that Dobell's entry showed a degree of distortion, which made it a caricature rather than a true portrait, but the court upheld the judging panel's decision. Resultant newspaper publicity greatly expanded interest in Dobell's work, but because of the controversy Dobell withdrew to Wangi Wangi, a small coastal town north of Sydney, where he set up a studio. He won the Archibald Prize twice more, in 1948 with a portrait of former NAS student Margaret Olley, and in 1959 with a portrait of Dr Edward McMahon. Dobell continued to draw all his life, filling sketchbooks, and recording the life and people of Wangi Wangi. He was knighted in 1966 and died on May 14, 1970.





A student participating in Drawing Week at the National Art School.
photograph: Peter Morgan

Sir William Dobell Art Foundation

The Sir William Dobell Art Foundation (SWDAF) was formed in 1971 from the artist's bequest with instructions that 'a Foundation be established for the benefit and promotion of art in NSW.' The Foundation has sponsored a wide variety of projects since then, including exhibitions, publications, acquisitions, scholarships and major public art commissions. The SWDAF first joined forces with NAS in 1998 to present the Dobell Drawing School – an annual, week-long workshop for year 11 students. Now in its twentieth year, this educational partnership has expanded to include the Dobell Regional Teachers' Workshop, which gives rural teachers the opportunity to work with a practising NAS artist.

The new Dobell Drawing Prize runs in alternate years to the Dobell Australian Drawing Biennial at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. These biennial exhibitions affirm the SWDAF's commitment to continuing the development of drawing as a medium in its own right, and as a fundamental element of the visual arts.

National Art School and Drawing

The National Art School (NAS) is Australia's leading independent fine art school. It is not only a producer of new art but a place to experience and participate in creativity and innovation. NAS is a growing and vibrant arts and education precinct. At NAS, the practice of Drawing, considered by many as the basis of an artist's training, has a long and distinguished history. Firmly embedded in its traditional roots, it is also a vibrant contemporary practice. In the NAS BFA program, it is a core discipline in first year and offered as a studio specialisation for second and third year. Despite its traditional roots it is also a very contemporary practice. Drawing opens the doors of our creative lives.

General Activities

PRE VISIT ACTIVITY

1. In 60 seconds, think of all the ways you can draw. Once you have a list, discuss it with your classmates.
2. Once you have completed your discussion, take another 60 seconds and think of more ways you can draw – think of how scale, material, style, process may increase the number of ways you can draw.

IN GALLERY ACTIVITY

3. Pick an artwork that you like. Spend five minutes looking at that one artwork without looking at the interpretive text. Write down your observations and how the work makes you feel. Once your five minutes are up, see how your response to the artwork compares to the artist's intention. Write a short comparison between the artist intentions and your interpretation.

POST VISIT ACTIVITY

4. In a maximum of 500 words, discuss how the *24th Dobell Drawing Prize* has affected your views of what drawing can be. Reference three artworks from the exhibition in your answer.



Installation view, *24th Dobell Drawing Prize*, National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2025, image courtesy the artists and National Art School © the artists, photograph: Peter Morgan

Cath BROPHY

ARTIST STATEMENT

Cath Brophy creates multimedia drawing installations on paper, based on her observations of the built environment. Beginning by drawing her architectural surroundings, she reconfigures isolated elements in new combinations to create abstract compositions.

As part of this process, Brophy also creates sketches and studies to develop tangential ideas that arise during her making; explorations that grow out of her larger constructions and flow back into them.

These smaller drawings sometimes develop into ongoing bodies of work, and *No Place Like Home – Dihua Street* (2024) is part of one such series. Its composition is configured from Brophy's studies of the residual outlines of demolished dwellings on the walls of adjacent buildings.

The intention is to draw the viewer's attention to the lingering traces of these structures, reflect on the shape they might have taken and ponder what new forms will take their place.

– Cath Brophy

QUESTIONS

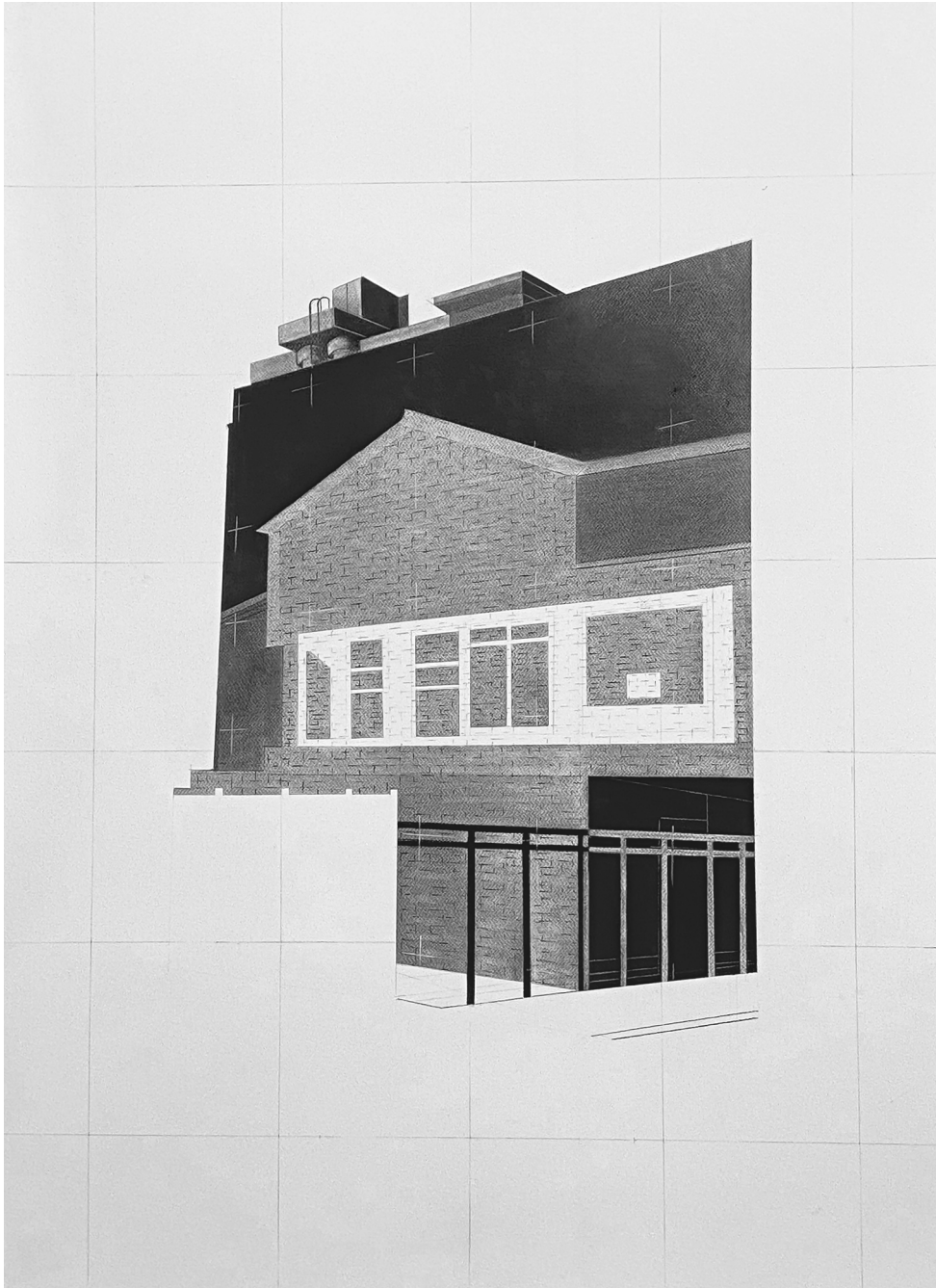
1. Analyse how perspective and tone play a role in *No Place Like Home – Dihua Street*.
2. The grid features prominently in Brophy's compositions. Discuss the use of the grid in art history. Why is it important and what is its origins?

ACTIVITY

Walk around your neighbourhood and look at the urban environment. Do you see traces of old structures? Create your own composition recording the urban history of your community using the traces of old structures as inspiration. Think about what new forms would take their place.

THEMES

- Urban Environment
- Memory
- Residual
- Architecture
- Traces



Cath Brophy, *No Place Like Home – Dihua Street*, 2024, charcoal and mixed media on paper

Peter BURKE

ARTIST STATEMENT

Peter Burke's work uses socially engaged strategies combined with current concerns and conventions of art, particularly those involving social interaction in public spaces. Known for his installations comprising paintings, drawing, performance and video, Burke's practice examines topical issues and questions the general state of contemporary society.

Over the past few years, Burke has created large-scale facsimiles of handwritten notes found around his neighbourhood. Captivated by the incomplete narratives and speculative nature of these messages, as well as the unique handwriting and scuffs on the paper, he replicates the notes at large; transforming them from ephemera into monuments that invite deeper scrutiny and interpretation.

While many of the notes I work with are discovered on streets or windows, this particular note was found in my letterbox. Whether mundane or revealing, these notes offer insights into the human condition and highlight the stories that often go unnoticed.

– Peter Burke

QUESTIONS

1. How does Burke's use of scale affect how the audience interprets the original source material?
2. Analyse how Burke's collection and reworking of everyday written fragments informs his drawing practice, and how his choice of materials contributes to the final work.

ACTIVITY

Find something ephemeral and text based at home that's small. Replicate it at a larger scale (A3 or above) and think about how it may have changed in meaning or significance.

THEMES

- Scale
- Ephemera
- Monuments
- Replication
- Text



Peter Burke, *I haven't forgotten*, 2024, synthetic polymer paint, ink, pastel and vinyl on paper



Tracey Clement, *Wear and Tear*, 2024, nylon tulle, polyester thread, cotton thread, glass

Tracey CLEMENT

ARTIST STATEMENT

Skin and textiles share certain qualities. They can be cut, torn, stretched and stitched; bear traces of age, use and abuse; and appear solid yet permeable, serving as both a barrier and a filter.

For *Wear and Tear* (2024), Tracey Clement draws with a needle and thread; first stitching by machine and then, nearly two decades later, by hand. These transparent drawings record time and mark space, tracing their own history in the round. Through this converging of past and present, the aging of the work mirrors the aging of its maker.

In much the same way as a tattooist inscribes flesh or a surgeon stitches wounds closed to create permanent scars, I have used a needle to mark these bodies in order to draw attention to the physical wear and tear of aging; in this case aching joints.

– Tracey Clement

QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast Clement's use of machine stitched and hand stitched thread in *Wear and Tear*. What do these processes signify in relation to the concept of the human body?
2. Discuss the use of textiles to represent the human body. What makes them similar or different?

ACTIVITY

Using unconventional materials, create your own artwork depicting the human body. Consider the marks that make every person unique – such as scars, spots, wrinkles, etc. How will you highlight them in your composition.

THEMES

- The body
- Textiles
- Time
- Age
- Metaphor

Sal COOPER

ARTIST STATEMENT

Sal Cooper's video work *Running with my Dog* (2024) is a literal embodiment of drawing. The artist filmed herself running using a drone hovering 700 metres above her, then converted the footage into a digital animation that traced her route. Without using a GPS or physical sketch, Cooper relied only on her sense of space and direction to execute an image of a dog, resulting in an ephemeral drawing mapped digitally.

With this drawing practice I am trying to explore a feeling of complete uncertainty about the outcome of my work, to consider my relationship with the ground I move on and the space in which I move, and create something that is simply expressed and lacking in artifice.

– Sal Cooper



QUESTIONS

1. Consider Cooper's work *Running with my Dog*. What do you think the work is? The performance or the video? Discuss.
2. How does technology play a role in drawing?

ACTIVITY

Taking inspiration from Cooper, think about how you can combine technology and your own movement to become a drawing tool. Create a large-scale drawing individually or in a group using this combination of technology and movement.

THEMES

- Animation
- Moving through space
- Record of performance
- Drone as drawing tool

Todd FULLER

ARTIST STATEMENT

Todd Fuller's practice is hallmarked by hand-drawn animations where drawing and erasure converge to explore gesture, time and memory.

Twilight Bark (2023) features Australian dogs barking to each other at night, inspired by the iconic 'Twilight Bark' scene from Disney's 1961 film *101 Dalmatians*. The original sequence was a modernist departure from Disney's romantic animation style. It showcased the innovative technique of xerography, transferring pencil drawings directly onto animation cels and in turn preserving the immediacy of the artist's hand for the first time.

Fuller's work echoes this spirit with charcoal, ink, and chalk marks that are repeatedly erased and redrawn, exploring the ephemeral nature of communication and the ambiguous messages conveyed in a contemporary context.

I pay homage to a moment in cinematic history when the art of drawing was elevated and redefined.

– Todd Fuller

QUESTIONS

1. Fuller was inspired by Disney's *101 Dalmatians* to create *Twilight Bark*. What pop culture references influence your artmaking? Discuss.
2. Compare Cooper and Fuller's Works. What differences and similarities do you see in their animations?

ACTIVITY

Create your own hand drawn animation that focus on your favourite animal. Think about the techniques of stop motion animation and narrative in creating your work.

THEMES

- Animation
- Hand drawn
- Time
- Memory
- Erasure
- Communication
- Pop Culture





Yvette Hamilton, *Afterglow*, 2024, fixed and unfixed photographic paper, LED rope

Yvette HAMILTON

ARTIST STATEMENT

‘Drawing with light’ was one of the earliest descriptions of photography in the 19th century and is the term that most accurately captures Yvette Hamilton’s cameraless, expanded photographic practice. *Afterglow* (2024) is a light drawing where line, gesture and tone are developed on photographic paper by an LED rope.

The work consists of fixed photographic paper (no longer sensitive to light) that shows the trace of past drawing actions; and unfixed photographic paper (still sensitive to light) that shows the active drawing process of the LED rope. Throughout the exhibition period, the unfixed paper transforms as it responds to the light source.

Afterglow is a drawing with light that aligns with my wider conceptual interests in the intersection of space, time and light, and the expectations of representation within photography.
– Yvette Hamilton

QUESTIONS

1. How does time play a role in the creation of Hamilton’s work *Afterglow*?
2. Discuss the use of light as a drawing tool.

ACTIVITY

Using camera-less darkroom photographic techniques such as cyanotype or photograms, create your own time-based photo drawing that plays with the concepts of time, space and light. Play with objects that have different opacities and textures as well as changing exposure times.

THEMES

- Process
- Experimental
- Photomedia Techniques
- Time
- Space
- Light
- Science

Rosemary LEE

ARTIST STATEMENT

In *24-1* (2024), Rosemary Lee observes tonal and compositional profundity in everyday life. She is drawn to compositional structures that allow her to divide and frame her scenes, creating works that amalgamate multiple landscapes. Working with fine points – pencil, pen, or etching needle – her work is vibrant and highly detailed.

The top half of the work is the scaffolding of a construction site near my home in Ashfield, and the bottom half is a demolition site in Summer Hill. The demolition site used to be a large pay-by-the-kilo op-shop. Before I went to art school, I ran a small secondhand clothing store on Etsy and I used to frequent the op-shop to source my wares.

– Rosemary Lee

QUESTIONS

1. Analyse Lee's compositional style. How does it enhance or reflect the subject matter in *24-1*?
2. Both Brophy and Lee consider the remnant of the urban environment in their work. Compare and contrast Brophy's *No Place Like Home – Dihua Street* and Lee's *24-1*.

ACTIVITY

The urban environment is full of layers. Think about two different places that have changed overtime and are important to you. Create a composition that combines the places into one seamless image that works as a reminder of a snapshot in time.

THEMES

- Urban Environment
- Multiple Landscapes
- High Detail
- Colour
- Industrial



Rosemary Lee, *24-1*, 2024, pencil on paper
Winner – 24th Dobell Drawing Prize



Julie PATERSON

ARTIST STATEMENT

Julie Paterson's collaborative textile work responds to the multiple mass fish kills along the Baaka (Darling River) in south-eastern Australia. *Menindee Memorial Loop* (2024) is a giant loop of cotton and linen offcuts, each scrap slowly stitched by hand with a hundred small crosses to memorialise the tens of millions of fish that have died in recent years. The use of cotton highlights the cotton industries that have diverted and depleted the river's water for irrigation.

For Paterson, the scale and widespread impact of these environmental tragedies called for a community approach. From across Australia and around the world, children, aged care residents, and those who have never stitched before answered the artist's call-out and sent her their stitched offcuts. This communal slow-stitching method signifies repair – mindfully drawing on the fabric as a way to process grief and call for action.

The Barkindji people see the River as their mother. They care for her – she cares for them. The loop structure represents a cycle of care that generates health and well-being. If we care for the environment, she will provide for us.

– Julie Paterson

QUESTIONS

1. Paterson's *Menindee Memorial Loop* is a collaborative artwork. Discuss the value of collaboration in artmaking and how it relates to the subject matter of the environment.
2. Paterson uses found objects and materials in her practice. Analyse how the use of recycled materials influences how an audience interacts with the works.

ACTIVITY

Julie Paterson is inviting people to contribute to the *Menindee Memorial Loop*. Contribute your own square of crosses in the gallery.

THEMES

- Community
- Environment
- Collaboration
- Textiles

J9 STANTON

ARTIST STATEMENT

Shadow of a disappearing landscape (2024) evokes the charred ranges of Tjoritja/West MacDonnell National Park in the Northern Territory. In recent years, wildfires have ravaged the landscape, fuelled by non-native plant species such as buffel grass, introduced in the 1870s for pastoral production. J9 Stanton repurposes discarded aluminium insect mesh from local homes in Mparntwe/Alice Springs to highlight the environmental and cultural impacts of invasion and industrialisation more broadly.

The artist manipulates the mesh's flexibility and strength to create intricate abstract representations of the terrain. She folds, cuts, and rejoins the mesh to form directional planes that mimic the region's rock escarpments, layering mesh along seams to enhance lines and shadows that resemble natural rock fissures. Suspended off the wall, the work casts shifting shadows when viewed from various angles.

Shadow of a disappearing landscape represents the fleeting nature of human existence amid timeless landscapes and the ghostly, ashen traces left behind after trees burn.

– J9 Stanton

QUESTIONS

1. Compare and contrast the subject matter and materials used in *Shadow of a disappearing landscape*. What message might the artist be conveying about sustainability and humanity's relationship with the natural world?
2. What impact does the texture and transparency of the Stanton's chosen materials have on the visual experience of *Shadow of a disappearing landscape*?

ACTIVITY

Using recycled man-made materials, recreate a section of your local environment that is important to you. Consider the textures, colours and scale in your composition.

THEMES

- Environment
- Destruction
- Introduced species
- Representative forms
- Human influence



Shonah TRESCOTT

ARTIST STATEMENT

Terra nullius, a Latin term meaning ‘land belonging to no one’, was a legal concept used by the British government to justify Australia’s violent founding and land theft, and to rationalise the oppression of First Nations peoples and the ongoing degradation of Country. Today, Australia has one of the highest forest losses in the world.

Shonah Trescott’s *Red Gold* (2024) is a time-based drawing comprising over 5,000 red cedar seeds. Its circular form represents the circumference of an old-growth cedar trunk and signals a requiem for stolen land, lives, and Country. The work is a call to action, inviting viewers to disrupt the circle by taking seeds away to plant. In this way, *Red Gold* contributes to the establishment of a new legacy rooted in collective reparative action, to address the ongoing exploitation of the human and more-than-human world.

By blending historical narratives with ecological urgency through ecofeminist drawing, I aim to foster dialogue about land, ownership, and the enduring impact of colonialism on Australia’s landscapes.

– Shonah Trescott

QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the use of nature as a drawing material.
2. Examine the relationship between the audience and the artwork *Red Gold*. Consider how audience participation affects the reading of the work.

ACTIVITY

Red Gold is made up of thousands of red cedar seeds. Trescott invites you to take some seeds home and plant them in a pot at home. Take the time to nurture the growth of the plant and when the seedling is large enough, transfer it into the ground somewhere where there is lots of space for it to grow – remember these trees can get really big!

THEMES

- Requiem
- Stolen Land
- Environment
- Eco Feminism
- Community
- Colonialism



Shonah Trescott, *Red Gold*, 2024, red cedar tree seeds (*Toona ciliata*)

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24th Dobell Drawing Prize Education Kit
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