

**NEXT
WAVE**

**NETS
VICTORIA**

**NEW WORKS BY FIVE
YOUNG REGIONAL ARTISTS**

ELLEN COYLE

TREVOR FLINN

CARLY PRESTON

RODERICK SPRIGG

PIP STAFFORD

**COME ON
THE SCENE**

**A NEXT WAVE AND NETS VICTORIA TOURING EXHIBITION
EDUCATION RESOURCE**



CONTENTS

Introduction	05
Landscape and mythology	09
The alter ego	11
Performance and documentation	13
Contemporary masculinity and identity	19
Community and connections	25
The art of confession	31
Anonymity and the Internet	33
Mobile moviemaking	35
Glossary and endnotes	38
Resources	39

Opposite:
Ellen COYLE

Foma
2008

silk dupion, jute twine, bemsilk, polycotton
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



INTRODUCTION

This education resource is intended as a starting point for generating ideas and classroom activities before, during and after a visit to *Come on the Scene* and is intended to complement and be used in addition to information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the Next Wave <www.nextwave.org.au> and NETS Victoria <www.netsvictoria.org/comeonthescene> websites. The resource includes an introduction to the exhibition, suggested points for discussion and practical activities for junior and senior students, together with resources. It is suggested that teachers select relevant sections of this resource to compile their own exhibition response sheet for students prior to their planned visit.

Opposite:
Carly PRESTON

Paper Wall
2008
linocut
installation view, as part of the
2008 Next Wave Festival
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave

Pre-viewing planning

In order to make the most of your visit it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following prior to visiting *Come on the Scene*:

- Suitability of exhibition content and subject matter for the year level you plan to bring.
- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and if admission fees apply.
- Staff availability to give introductory talk/tour.
- Education and public programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition.

Introduction to the exhibition

Come on the Scene presents new projects from five young regionally based Australian artists who have engaged with the communities around them through their creative practices. The resulting works provide a fresh perspective on regional Australia and the role of art in fostering a new sense of community and connectedness. The exhibition traverses new media, sculpture, painting, printmaking, installation and performance alongside documentation of the works by **Ellen Coyle** (Bendigo, VIC), **Trevor Flinn** (Dunkeld, VIC), **Carly Preston** (Ararat, VIC), **Roderick Sprigg** (Mukinbudin, WA) and **Pip Stafford** (Hobart, TAS).

Come on the Scene is a Next Wave and NETS Victoria touring exhibition. A selection of the works were initially presented as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival *Closer Together*. *Come on the Scene* has been curated by Jeff Khan and Tamara Marwood.

* Unless otherwise stated all text appearing in quotation marks is sourced directly from the exhibition catalogue.



Curriculum links and connections

The exhibition can be used to engage students in critical and creative thinking about ideas in art, studies of society and the environment, and design and technology and inspire their own art, design and fashion practice. As this exhibition is touring nationally teachers are encouraged to adapt the curriculum links given in the list below to suit the relevant state curricula. Use this list to generate ideas, activities and points for discussion, and where suitable contact Education staff at your local gallery for further ideas and suggestions.

Visual/Creative/Studio Arts

- The influence of the personal and cultural on an artist's practice.
- Artists' practice, collaboration and studio production.
- Artists' concepts, ideas and inspiration.
- The role of the artist in society.
- The diversity and range of media, materials, processes and techniques used by contemporary artists.
- Responding to diverse artworks: analysis and interpretation using appropriate language.
- Issues affecting remote and regionally-based artists.

Studies of Society and the Environment

- Artworks as commentary about interconnectedness between humans, society and environment.
- Social issues including identity and gender issues.
- Visual arts as a reflection of ideas and beliefs in contemporary culture and society.
- The role of myths in society.

Starting points

Some of the key motifs and ideas explored in the exhibition can be used as starting points. These can be developed according to the year level and specific interests of your students. Consider some of the following:

- Landscape and mythology.
- The alter ego, identity and self.
- Gender issues, masculinity.
- Confession, anonymity and the Internet.
- Community and connections.

Opposite:

Roderick SPRIGG

Occasional Tables

2008

Installation, digital video and community art

installation view at Craft Victoria,

as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



LANDSCAPE AND MYTHOLOGY

Despite the fact that less than 10% of Australians reside in non-urban areas, self-perceptions and popular ideas of Australian identity have largely been formed through the rural landscape, with the Australian outback featuring in most debates concerning national identity.

Visual artists, poets, songwriters, filmmakers and authors have long drawn from and been inspired by the Australian landscape, and continue to use it as subject matter for their work. Many of Australia's most well-known myths and legends have their origins in the bush: based on the trials and tribulations of the people who lived in Australia's rural and remote areas. Artists such as Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton, Frederick McCubbin, Sidney Nolan and Russell Drysdale drew artistic inspiration from the stories surrounding the Australian bush landscape and in the process mythologised the 'bush' and the selectors; shearers; swagmen; drovers; lost children and bushrangers who inhabited it. They created stereotypes that resonate still.

Trevor Flinn continues this tradition of drawing on the mythology of the Australian bush landscape as inspiration for his work *The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain*. His work explores the rural myth of the puma that allegedly stalks the foothills of the Grampians near his home at Dunkeld in western Victoria, preying on the unwary and terrorising young children. Since childhood Flinn has been both terrified by and fascinated with the myth of the puma, commenting that, "I remember experiencing a mixture of fear and desire at times, especially when we came across particularly eerie scenes like dismembered sheep. At any moment I half expected to come face to face with the big cat."¹

Although there have been numerous unconfirmed sightings of a large animal roaming the foothills of the Grampians, the story has never been substantiated. Local stories suggest that the puma is descended from a puma kept by US troops stationed in the area during World War II. The story goes that pumas were kept as mascots, and were released into the bush at the end of the war. The 'stranger' of the title refers both to the artist's somewhat uneasy relationship to the land, and also to the relationship that introduced animals like the puma, have with the landscape.

Opposite:
Trevor FLINN
The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain
2008
still from DVD (detail)

Courtesy the artist



Opposite:

Trevor FLINN

Work from the series

The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain

2008

mixed media installation

installation view at Platform, as part of the

2008 Next Wave Festival

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave

THE ALTER EGO

While researching *The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain* Flinn compiled video testimonials from local residents who claimed to have sighted the puma with the intention of exhibiting these. He later changed his approach and commenced making actual puma costumes. Embellishing the local myth of the Grampians Puma, he adopted an alter ego for himself in the form of a rock-star who fronts the fictional punk rock/art performance band The Meat Eaters. (The Meat Eaters is Trevor Flinn, in the guise of the puma, accompanied by his sister Verona Flinn). Employing a raw, DIY aesthetic, similar to that espoused by the punk movement, the puma is filmed in a series of short video vignettes. Trevor Flinn's video work *The Meat Eaters* is presented as a DVD projection, incorporated into a mixed-media installation that includes *The Meat Eaters Tour Van* and the life-sized *The Puma*.

On-line gamers and those with a presence in virtual worlds like Second Life create avatars to stand in for themselves. Similarly artists often develop alternative characters or an alter ego for their work. The alter ego can operate as a device that allows someone to create an idealised version of themselves; change gender; act out dangerous and/or transgressive behaviours and overcome the limitations of the human body.

In *The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain* the puma trades his status as rural myth for the trappings of celebrity and fame, and a more visible role as a rock star. Flinn comments: "The world's current obsession with art, music and fame is something I find both troubling and strangely compelling. My ongoing search for meaning in such a world is accompanied by an overwhelming desire to practice some kind of narcissistic display – which I'm convinced is something we all secretly desire."²



PERFORMANCE AND DOCUMENTATION

In *Come on the Scene* both Trevor Flinn and Ellen Coyle's works incorporate performance and documentation. Performance artists usually have their work documented using video, film or photography in order to have a record of the performance. This also allows the work to reach a wider audience than those who were present at the original event. Apart from visual documentation, text-based and oral accounts of a performance can also serve to document and provide a lasting record of the performance.

Ellen Coyle's work *Foma* takes its title from a made-up word in Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Cat's Cradle* meaning 'harmless untruths'. *Foma* comprises three textile costumes made by the artist presented alongside video documentation taken of Coyle's performance in costume. During the 2008 Next Wave Festival the artist performed along Melbourne's Southbank for several hours each night over a four-night period. She was interested in the idea of people coming upon her performance unexpectedly and how they might react.

Opposite:
Artist, Ellen Coyle
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



Opposite:

Trevor FLINN

The Puma

from the series *The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain*
2008

faux fur, plaster, leather, wood, wire, hand-knitted balaclava
installation view at Platform, as part of the
2008 Next Wave Festival

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave

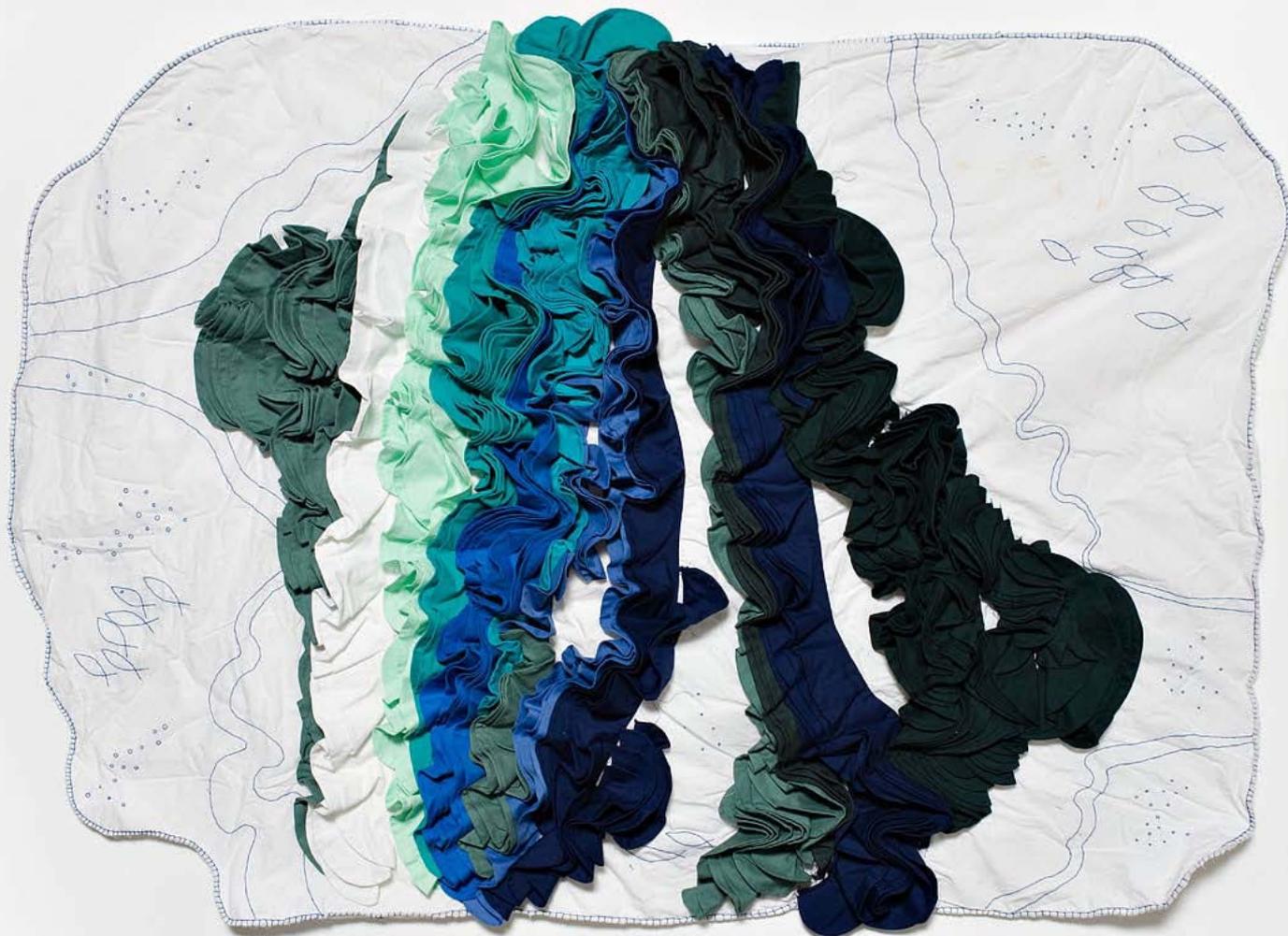
JUNIOR

Questions

- What do Trevor Flinn's videos remind you of?
- Who do you think 'the stranger' of the title refers to?
- Is the puma in Trevor Flinn's installation frightening or funny?
- What words would you use to describe the puma?
- Draw a picture of *The Puma*.
- How does wearing a costume or a disguise allow people to behave differently?
- How do Trevor Flinn and Ellen Coyle present themselves in their video works?

Activities

- Research local folk tales, myths or legends that are relevant to where you live. Myths are sometimes based on a real event that has become distorted over time. In the classroom discuss the origins of any local myths and whether they are based in reality. To gain a different perspective on the local myth you are researching, interview a parent or grandparent, or senior members of your community.
- Explore the medium of the graphic novel as a narrative vehicle. Work collaboratively to design and construct a frieze in the form of a graphic novel to illustrate one of the local myths that you have researched. Incorporate collage, painting, drawing, text, computer-generated images, printmaking etc. into your frieze.
- Design and create a costume to represent a character or animal that appears in your local myth. Imagine that you have to tell a stranger about this local myth or legend. Make a sequence of drawings (a storyboard), short film or video that retells this story.



Ellen COYLE

Foma #2: The All Encompassing Comfort of Religion

2008

polycotton, broadcloth, polyester wadding, crochet cotton

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave

SENIOR

Questions

- Discuss the methods by which the mythic narrative of the Grampian's puma has been conveyed in Trevor Flinn's installation *The Puma, the Stranger and the Mountain*.
- Choose two of Trevor Flinn's video works and comment on the way in which the artist has used character, colour, aesthetic, lighting, sound and narrative.
- Referring to the same two works discuss the way in which the artist makes reference to ideas of freedom and captivity; isolation and identity; sexuality and desire; humour and tragedy.
- What comment, if any, do you think Flinn's work might be making on the impact of introduced species on the rural environment and on native wildlife. Support this with reference to the work.
- Flinn casts himself as an outsider or stranger and has commented that he is intimidated by the landscape where he grew up. Why do you think he might find his surroundings intimidating?
- In 1968 American pop artist Andy Warhol predicted that: "In the future everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes."³ With the popularity of social networking sites (such as MySpace and Facebook) and reality television programs, is fame and short-lived celebrity something that we all aspire to? How does Trevor Flinn's installation comment on the culture of fame and celebrity within contemporary society?
- Look at the way in which Trevor Flinn and Ellen Coyle's works have been installed in the gallery spaces. How does the display and presentation of these works contribute to your understanding of them? Do the different components of the installations when viewed together add to your understanding of the works? In your response refer to both artists' use of media, scale, lighting, sound, arrangement of works in the space etc.
- Discuss the role of documentation in performance art. Which do you consider to be the artwork, the performance or the documentary record of the performance? Or is it both?

Activities

- Using Trevor Flinn's work as a starting point discuss the concept of an alter ego (alternative identity) in visual art and the notion of presenting an alternate, transformed, or idealised self. Compile a list of alter egos that you are familiar with from literature, television, comics and films and list the traits and abilities associated with them. What different roles can an alter ego assume? Does the media in which they are conceived and acted out affect your understanding of the alter egos you have identified?
- Create either an alter ego for yourself or an avatar to stand in for you in cyberspace. Is your alter ego human? What sort of costume, adornment or disguise does it have? Does your alter ego have any special gifts or physical abilities? Using Photoshop or other computer imaging programs design and create a portrait of your alter ego.
- Research the work of Australian and international artists who have created alter egos in their artwork. You might like to look at the work of surrealist artist **Max Ernst** (b. Germany, 1891–1976) who created a bird named Loplop as his alter ego. American artist **Matthew Barney** (b. USA, 1967) performs multiple roles in his *Cremaster* cycle of films including that of a woman, a satyr and the escape artist Harry Houdini. **Trenton Doyle Hancock** (b. USA, 1974) has created an alter ego, Torpedo Boy, who appears in his paintings and installations. Australian artist **Sarah CrowEST's** (b. UK, 1959) video works explore the role of the alter ego in contemporary visual art. She has created a character called Bobblehead who appears in many of her video works. Bobblehead has an alter ego called Winifred and together the two characters act out and parody the role and concerns of the contemporary artist. You can view or download two of her videos online at: www.unisa.edu.au/samstag/scholars/scholars07/crowest.asp

Roderick Sprigg
Occasional Tables

HEM | Obituary | [Roderick Sprigg](#)



CONTEMPORARY MASCULINITY AND IDENTITY

Roderick Sprigg combines his contemporary art practice with work on the family wheat and sheep farm near the small town of Mukinbudin, 300km to the north-east of Perth. For his project *Occasional Tables* the artist undertook an extensive process of community-building, which led to his inviting pairs of fathers and sons to work together to design and construct a piece of furniture, a coffee table, as a means of spending time together working on a shared project. This seemingly simple request belies the seriousness of the project's intent: to comment on masculine modes of communication and defined rural gender roles.

The project's aims underscore the lingering mythology of rural Australia – which encompasses notions of masculinity; self-reliance; individualism and stoicism – notions seemingly at odds with the message from various health and social service agencies highlighting the necessity and importance of more meaningful communication and interaction.

Each father and son pair included in *Occasional Tables* spent time together on this project, requiring them to co-operate and communicate. The completed or in some cases incomplete tables are displayed in the gallery spaces, alongside video footage documenting the process and their responses to themes of manhood, masculinity and father-son relationships in a rural setting.

For this project Sprigg took on a multitude of roles including facilitator; organiser; financial manager and motivator. During this time he occupied a strange space: he was simultaneously part of the society and yet deliberately placed himself outside of it in order to comment on it. He was also a participant in the project, designing and constructing a table with his father, which was not completed.

Sprigg is keen for audiences to use his work as a springboard to look at their own memories, histories and backgrounds: "Hopefully the situation will be the catalyst to access those general themes."⁴

At a time where rural Australia is in crisis, affected by a lack of opportunities for young people; ongoing drought conditions; rural health and mental health issues; falling commodity prices and shortages in resources and essential services, the project highlights the necessity of communication in order to sustain a healthy community.

Opposite:

Roderick SPRIGG

Table 1: Unfinished Box Table

(Stephen Sprigg and Roderick Sprigg)

jarrah

from *Occasional Tables*

2008

installation, digital video and community art

installation view at Craft Victoria, as part of the

2008 Next Wave Festival

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave

Roderick Sprigg
Occasional Tables



JUNIOR

Questions

- Can you communicate without words? How do you do this? Can you demonstrate this?
- What particular issues or themes does the artist seem concerned with?
- Why do you think that the artist asked father and sons to work together to build a table?
- Not all of the tables were completed. Do you think that this matters?
- Are the videos an important part of the artwork? Why?

Activities

- Play a game of 'Chinese Whispers' in the classroom to highlight how easily a simple message can become confused. The first player whispers a phrase or sentence to the next player. Each player successively whispers what that player believes he or she heard to the next player. The last player announces the statement to the entire group. Errors typically accumulate in the retellings, so the statement announced by the last player can alter significantly, and often amusingly, from the one uttered by the first. This simple exercise illustrates to children how easily information can become corrupted by indirect communication.
- Using Roderick Sprigg's project *Occasional Tables* as a starting point discuss the importance of communication and co-operation in a creative collaborative project. Before commencing a collaborative project the teacher could lead a discussion on the conduct expected in a collaborative venture. For example adhering to mutually agreed approaches on the use of particular materials and/or techniques and why this is important. Discuss with students what the benefits of working collaboratively are. Are there any disadvantages that they can foresee? Students can work together in pairs on a project to design and make an object of their choice.

Opposite:

Roderick SPRIGG

Occasional Tables

2008

installation, digital video and community art

installation view at Craft Victoria,

as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



SENIOR

Questions

- What do you think were the aims of Roderick Sprigg's project *Occasional Tables*? Do you think that he achieved these aims? Why/why not?
- What issues does Sprigg's work raise in relation to themes of rural manhood, masculinity and father-son relationships?
- What stereotypes are you aware of that exist in relation to traditional rural masculinity? Does Sprigg's project *Occasional Tables* refute or reinforce these stereotypes?
- Do you think that this project would have been applicable in an urban setting? Why/why not?
- Discuss the way in which *Occasional Tables* has been presented in the gallery. Why do you think that the artist included documentation of the father and son pairs discussing and working on their projects?
- How does the video documentation add to your understanding of the project and its aims?
- Compare and contrast the way in which Roderick Sprigg and Trevor Flinn explore contemporary notions of masculinity and identity in their respective works.
- As an artist what role does Sprigg play in the rural community in which he lives and works?
- What challenges or difficulties might artists who work in rural or remote areas face? How might these challenges be overcome?
- What benefits might there be for an artist working in regional or remote areas?

Activities

- Explore your own family history by speaking to your parents and or grandparents about their experiences. Ask if you can borrow photographs from your family archive. Photocopy these and use as the starting point for a work that explores your own background and identity. Experiment with combining digital and traditional relief-printing techniques. Or you might scan a photograph, manipulate it in Photoshop, print it on a colour printer and then use over-painting or over-printing to add layers of your family or your own story. You might like to create your own iconography as a way of expressing your identity and cultural background.
- Exploring ideas around family and self-identity create an installation at your school that incorporates objects, images, music or texts that have personal significance. Consider what these components might mean individually and when placed together. How does the placement of the objects create meaning in the space? Consider how you might create atmosphere using sound and lighting. Title your installation. Consider how the title of a work can add to or affect the audience's understanding of the work.

Opposite:

Roderick SPRIGG

Occasional Tables

2008

installation, digital video and community art

installation view at Craft Victoria,

as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival

Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



BRIDGE
FASHION
AGENCIES



COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIONS

Carly Preston's installation of A3 size hand-printed wallpaper, *Paper Wall*, blurs the boundaries between art and interior decoration and both references and celebrates the history of decorative pattern in domestic rural settings.

In its developmental stages the project was titled *Bring a Plate* and for this Preston worked with the Ararat branch of the Country Women's Association (CWA). She wanted to investigate how women in regional and remote communities come together through a mutual interest in practical art and craft making. For many women in remote and regional areas groups like the CWA provide an opportunity to socialise with women with shared interests, practice handcrafts like knitting, quilting, crocheting and embroidery and pass these on to a younger generation. The artist invited local women to bring objects with patterns and designs to a CWA meeting. Selected patterns and designs were simplified to create motifs, which were then screen-printed onto tea towels at a workshop she conducted with CWA members.

Preston decided to narrow the focus of her investigation from the general history of decorative pattern in the region to a more specific focus on her own family history and familiar domestic objects that had been owned and handed down through her mother's side of the family. Re-titling the project *Paper Wall* she collated patterns and designs from crockery

belonging to her grandmother and great-grandmother. Simplifying these patterns, the artist hand-printed floral motifs onto 300 A3 sized sheets of paper, enough to wallpaper a wall in Melbourne where the project was first presented as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival.

Wallpaper is associated with interior design and the domestic, and a number of contemporary artists have used wallpaper in gallery installations. In 1966 pop artist **Andy Warhol** (b. USA, 1928-1987) exhibited his *Cow Wallpaper* for the first time. In 1968 the exterior of Stockholm's Moderna Museet was covered with his *Cow Wallpaper*. Warhol was attracted to printmaking – specifically the silkscreen technique – as it allowed him to produce multiple copies of artworks whilst simultaneously minimising his own hand in the production of the artwork. Warhol was fascinated with mass production and consumer culture and he liked that printmaking enabled him to mimic the appearance of advertisements, with their bold outlines and flat graphic colouration.

Ballarat-born artist **David Noonan** (b. Australia, 1969) has also produced wallpaper. His *Owl Wallpaper* (2002-2003) references Warhol's *Cow Wallpaper* and continues Noonan's interest in film, the gothic and popular culture. For a recent touring exhibition *Multiplicity*⁵ Noonan provided 20 sheets of wallpaper for each of the participating venues. The wallpaper was then installed onto the gallery walls. "In the past, the artist has explored different display options, including placing other artworks over the top – blurring the boundaries of the artwork with the gallery walls, and referencing the domestic environment."⁶

Opposite:
Carly PRESTON
Paper Wall
2008
linocut
installation view, as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



JUNIOR

Questions

- List some everyday objects that have patterns on them.
- Does *Paper Wall* remind you of anything?
- How can a repeated image be more interesting than a single image?
- What do you think will happen to *Paper Wall* when the exhibition finishes?
- If *Paper Wall* had been installed on a wall in a house, instead of an art gallery, do you think it would still be art?

Activity

- Patterns are composed of one or more motifs that have been multiplied and ordered in a regular sequence over a surface. Since ancient time repeat patterns have been used in decoration, ornament and design. Using Ellen Coyle's *Paper Wall* as a starting point, students can design their own wallpaper based on a repeated motif or pattern that has personal significance to them. Explore the use of repetition and how this can work as a design principle by experimenting with the use of geometric shapes or natural forms. Consider using a motif that is at odds with the domestic origins of wallpaper. Produce multiple copies of the designs using either a photocopier or stencil and display these in the classroom.

Opposite:
Carly PRESTON
Paper Wall
2008
linocut
installation view, as part of
the 2008 Next Wave Festival
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



SENIOR

Questions

- Comment on the use of motif and repetition in Carly Preston's *Paper Wall*?
- What effect is achieved by placing a form of interior decoration (wallpaper) ordinarily associated with a personal and domestic environment into a public and non-domestic space?
- *Paper Wall* was initially conceived of and installed on a brick wall in Melbourne as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival. How is the work transformed by installing it in a gallery space? Might this contradict the original intention and production of the artwork?
- Discuss how ideas of memory, the personal and the ephemeral operate in Carly Preston's *Paper Wall*?
- Consider the wall text, exhibition catalogue and any other printed material written about Carly Preston's work *Paper Wall*. How does this change your understanding of the work?
- How do Ellen Coyle's textile works and Carly Preston's *Paper Wall* refer to the domestic tradition of art and craft?
- "The printmaking process allows an artist to make multiple copies of one work, making it a more democratic form of art making." Do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.
- Choose one of the artists in this exhibition and discuss how they have combined new and traditional technologies to make their artwork.

Activities

- Research Andy Warhol's *Death and Disaster Series* (1962-1965). For this group of works Warhol was experimenting with documentary journalistic images taken out of context and the repetition of imagery. Some of the photographs that Warhol chose as source images for this series depict horrific scenes, such as race riots, car crashes, electric chairs and nuclear explosions. Discuss what happens to an image when it is taken out of its original context and placed in another unrelated context. Does repetition reduce the impact of an image or increase it? What are the ethical concerns surrounding the appropriation, use and public display of images of suffering in an artwork? Discuss in relation to Andy Warhol's work. Experiment with and evaluate the use of repetition and appropriation of imagery in your own artwork.
- Research the work of **Yinka Shonibare** (b. UK, 1962) a contemporary British born Nigerian artist. His work explores ideas around contemporary African identity, the legacy of European colonialism, class structure and social justice. Many of his works incorporate textiles designs in traditional African patterns and colours. You can find out more about the artist and the themes in his work online at: www.dareonline.org/themes/translations/shonibare.html

Opposite:

Artist, Carly Preston
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



THE ART OF CONFESSION

On the home page of artist Pip Stafford's *I Wish I Could Show You* website is the following text: 'Something to confess? A precious moment to share? iwishicouldshowyou.com for all your private moments made public...'⁷

The Tasmanian-based artist is the creator of **iwishicouldshowyou.com**, an Internet site that is seeking anonymous videos made using mobile telephones to create a database of user-made creativity. Stafford is particularly interested in people providing the site with video content of a personal nature including confessions, the sharing of secrets, love and hate letters etc.

As part of *Come on the Scene* Pip Stafford's project *I Wish I Could Show You* will be installed in galleries as an interactive work, with visitors encouraged to video a 'confession' via a mobile telephone and then upload it to the artist's website. A computer installed in the gallery will allow audiences to view other people's confessions.

For an earlier work titled *Nobody Knows You Better Than I Do* (2008) Stafford asked people to provide anonymous videos of personal daily rituals and private habits. The artist explains: 'I am interested in the everyday; the mundane, daily rituals and private life. The length and breadth of lovers' intimate knowledge, the things a mother no longer sees her grown up children do. The daily intimacies that we keep entirely to ourselves.'⁸ In true confessional style Pip Stafford also has her own blog, Bits of a broken something at: **<http://pipstafford.blogspot.com/>**

Opposite:
Pip STAFFORD
I Wish I Could Show You
2008
interactive multimedia installation
installation view at Horse Bazaar,
as part of the 2008 Next Wave Festival
Photographer: Jeremy Dillon

Courtesy the artist and Next Wave



ANONYMITY AND THE INTERNET

The Internet has become a popular forum for the sharing of intimate personal information and images, ranging from chatrooms and personal blogs to social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook. The Internet also hosts many websites offering places to confess, anonymously ranging from religious-based sins at www.absolution-online.com to a site for people to release their inner exhibitionist at www.confessionjunkie.com. Artistic projects are well represented and one of the best-known artist sites is postsecret.blogspot.com, an extension of an art project in which people write their secrets on postcards and mail them to an address in Germantown, Maryland in the USA. It seems that there is strong appeal for people in sharing their lives and innermost secrets with potentially millions of strangers on the Internet, both publicly and anonymously.

Opposite:
Pip STAFFORD
I Wish I Could Show You
2008
still from website

Courtesy the artist



MOBILE MOVIEMAKING

The mobile telephone has become popular with eyewitnesses and bystanders who use it to record still shots or video footage of dramatic events or disasters unfolding. 'Open source news' or citizen journalism as it is often referred to, is now used by many television companies who rely on visual content provided by eyewitnesses for immediate and raw coverage of dramatic events.

New generation mobile telephones are now capable of capturing high-resolution video that can match that recorded in video cameras, and in 2007 the mobile phone was honoured at *The Pocket Film Festival* in Paris. The Festival aims to showcase an emerging art form and to demonstrate that the mobile phone is rapidly becoming the "fourth screen" in our lives, after the cinema, television and the Internet.⁹ In 2008 the telecommunications company Nokia announced their competition *Filmmaker*, with American director **Spike Lee** (b. USA, 1957) working with them to direct a movie made with mobile phone footage submitted via the Internet.¹⁰

Opposite:
Pip STAFFORD
I Wish I Could Show You
2008
still from website (detail)

Courtesy the artist



SENIOR

Questions

- What might attract people to tell their secrets anonymously via the Internet?
- How does Pip Stafford's web-based project *iwishicouldtellyou.com* compare to other confessional websites that encourage people to post anonymous confessions online?
- Are there any ethical concerns or considerations that a gallery might need to resolve before exhibiting this work in a gallery space? What might they be?
- How does the resolution and quality of the mobile phone footage in *iwishicouldtellyou.com* have an affect on your understanding of the work?
- In the Catholic faith the confessional booth is a private and intimate space where people can confess their sins to a priest in order to be absolved. How is the meaning of the confessional affected by placing it in a public space?
- Compare and contrast the way in which Pip Stafford and Trevor Sprigg's installations engage with themes relating to celebrity, identity and self?
- Why do you think that Pip Stafford conceived her work to be available online? Is this likely to attract a different audience to those who might normally encounter her work in an art gallery?

Activities

Research the following artists whose work incorporates aspects of the autobiographical or confessional:

- **Frida Kahlo** (b. Mexico, 1907–1954) painted numerous autobiographical self-portraits based on her personal experiences, including her marriage, her miscarriages, and her numerous operations.
- British artist **Tracey Emin** (b. UK, 1963) has made a career from using her life as the subject matter of her work. Emin's work is linked to ideas of disclosure and a blurring of autobiography and fiction. Nominated for the Turner Prize in 1999, she currently holds the title of Professor of Confessional Art at The European Graduate School in Saas-Fee, Switzerland. Emin's works included such autobiographical pieces as: *Everyone I Have Ever Slept With 1963-95* (1995); *Exploration of the Soul* (1994); *My Bed* (1998) and the novel *Strangeland* (2005). You can view images and read the article 'Tracey Emin and the Web confessional' at: www.newmediastudies.com/art/art-emin.htm
- **Anastasia Klose** (b. Australia, 1978) employs video, performance and installation art to explore themes of a highly personal nature including confession; revelation; embarrassment and public humiliation. Of Klose's work, Robert Leonard said: 'We are embarrassed to watch, yet we identify. It might not seem finely crafted and yet - for what it is trying to do - I don't think it could be done better. It feels completely contemporary - it could be on YouTube.'¹¹ Find out more at: www.tolarnogalleries.com/anastasia-klose
- Australian artist **Catherine E Bell's** (b. Australia, 1969) artwork centres on autobiographical experience. You can read her artist statement, extensive essays addressing the themes and ideas explored in her work and view videos online at The Australian Video Art Archive at: www.videoartchive.org.au/
[Teachers please note: This site contains some images and/or videos that some viewers may find distressing, offensive and/or disturbing. Viewer discretion is advised.]

Opposite:
Pip STAFFORD
I Wish I Could Show You
2008
still from website

Courtesy the artist

GLOSSARY

Appropriation

In the visual arts, the term appropriation is often used in a general way to refer to the use made of borrowed elements in the creation of new work. These borrowed elements might include images, forms, or styles from art history or popular culture, or materials and techniques from non-art contexts.

Blog

A blog (a contraction of the term 'Web log') is a website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.

Citizen journalism

Citizen journalism, also known as open-source news or participatory or democratic journalism, is the act of non-professionals playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing and disseminating news and information.

DIY

DIY: an acronym for 'Do it yourself' is an approach to art and music production associated with the punk movement of the 1970s. DIY culture offers an alternative to the mainstream and is characterised by low-tech resourcefulness, anti-capitalist concerns and inexpensive production.

Documentation

The ephemeral nature of the medium was an issue for early Performance artists. Performance pieces were recorded in photography, film and video, and these eventually became the primary means by which Performance reached a wide public.

Performance art

In Performance art the medium is the artist's own body and the artwork takes the form of actions performed by the artist. Performance art has its origins in Futurism and Dada, but became a major phenomenon in the 1960s and 1970s and can be seen as a branch of Conceptual art.

Screenprint

A form of printmaking. A print made when a stencil is placed on a screen and ink is forced through the screen onto a surface forming a layer of pigment onto the surface. Colours or images can be layered onto the one surface through the screen. Also known as a silkscreen.

ENDNOTES

- 1 'The Puma, Stranger and Stranger, interview with a big cat', in *Trouble* MAY08, www.introuble.com.au/www2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=51&Itemid=65 [Last accessed: 19 January 2009]
- 2 Ibid
- 3 In February 1968 Andy Warhol exhibited his first international retrospective exhibition at the Moderna Museet gallery in Stockholm. The exhibition catalogue contained Warhol's comment that: "In the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes."
- 4 Lily Bragge, 'Art in the Family', *The Age* May 13, 2008, www.theage.com.au/news/arts/art-in-the-family/2008/05/13/1210444438221.html [last accessed February 1 2009]
- 5 *Multiplicity: prints and multiples from the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the University of Wollongong* (Curated by Glenn Barkley and Katie Dyer), Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney 12 October 2006 – 25 March 2007
- 6 Elise Routledge, *Multiplicity: Prints and Multiples from the collections of the Museum of Contemporary Art and the University of Wollongong* Education Kit, produced by MCA Learning, February 2007
- 7 Pip Stafford, (website) *I Wish I Could Show You* www.iwishicouldshowyou.com [last accessed 8 February 2009]
- 8 Pip Stafford, (exhibition) *Nobody Knows You Better Than I Do*, Platform Artist Group Inc., March 2008. <http://platformartistsgroup.blogspot.com/2008/02/pip-stafford.html> [last accessed 8 February 2009]
- 9 'Paris to honour small screen at mobile phone film festival', www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200706/s1946692.htm [last accessed 8 February 2009]
- 10 'Spike Lee teams with Nokia on mobile phone movie', www.news.com.au/entertainment/story/0,26278,23596433-10388,00.html [last accessed 3 February 2009]
- 11 Robert Leonard, Director Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane awarding Anastasia Klose the 2007 Prometheus Visual Arts Award, www.prometheusartaward.com.au/gallery2007.php [last accessed 11 February 2009]

RESOURCES

Art and design education resource guide

The Art and Design Education Resource Guide (ADERG) is the standard reference for courses offered in art and design at tertiary institutions in Australia and New Zealand. Commenced in 1983, ADERG is a Directory of courses, a showcase of graduate work and a selection guide for those wishing to undertake a course of study. ADERG contains information about all of the institutions offering art and design courses as well as showcasing the work of recent graduates.

www.dgdesignnetwork.com.au/aderg/

Blast

The BBC website Blast features art and design, dance, writing, film, music and fashion for young people.

On the fashion pages budding fashion designers can upload their design ideas to a gallery, look at style on the streets of Britain and find tips for their own fashion projects. Features a comprehensive section on Ethical fashion and tips for restyling garments.

www.bbc.co.uk/blast/

Country Women's Association

The CWA of Australia is the largest women's organisation in Australia with a membership of approx. 25,500 in 1500 branches around the States and Territory. The CWA aims to improve the conditions for women and children and make life better for families, especially those living in rural and remote Australia.

www.cwaa.org.au/

Generationnext

Generationnext is a youth initiative of the MCA (Museum of Contemporary Art) Sydney. Generationnext is for all high school aged teenagers interested in art, whether they are studying Visual Arts at school or not. Find out more at the MCA website: <http://www.mca.com.au>
For more information about generationnext on MySpace visit: www.myspace.com/genextmca

NETS Victoria

NETS Victoria is the peak body for visual arts touring in the state of Victoria. They provide opportunities for regional communities to access and engage with the best contemporary art, craft and design. NETS Victoria works closely with curators and galleries to develop ambitious and stimulating exhibitions that foster the exchange of ideas and promote new works by a diverse range of leading and emerging Australian artists.

www.netsvictoria.org/comeonthescene

Next Wave

Next Wave is a biennial festival and artist development organisation, presenting genre-busting new works by the next wave of Australian artists. Kickstart is Next Wave's major developmental activity, assisting young artists across artforms to develop new work in a supportive environment. Taking place in the non-festival year, Kickstart projects are developed with a view towards inclusion in the 2010 Next Wave Festival and respond to the Festival's theme, NO RISK TOO GREAT.

www.nextwave.org.au

Regional Arts Australia

The Regional Arts Online website contains helpful information and tools for people involved as artists and arts workers in regional Australia.

www.regionalarts.com.au

Regional Arts Victoria

ERAVe is Regional Arts Victoria's online resource and service for regional artists, organisations and networks. Regional Arts Victoria (RAV) is the peak regional arts organisation in Victoria and one of the State Government's twelve major cultural organisations. The site contains information on upcoming events, funding opportunities, news, links, member classifieds and an email newsletter.

www.rav.net.au

VCE Season of Excellence

An annual festival of works created by top Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) students. On this website you can view student folios from previous VCE Top Designs exhibitions.

Designed to Inspire: www.museum.vic.gov.au

COME ON THE SCENE

A NEXT WAVE AND NETS VICTORIA TOURING EXHIBITION

CURATED BY JEFF KHAN AND TAMARA MARWOOD

www.netsvictoria.org/comeonthescene

EDUCATION RESOURCE

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TOURING PARTNERS

NEXT WAVE



ARTS VICTORIA

THE VISUAL ARTS AND CRAFT STRATEGY



Living the Arts



The tour of this exhibition is supported by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria and the Community Support Fund

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www.netsvictoria.org/comeonthescene

A comprehensive online resource featuring background information, tour itinerary, artist biographies, interviews, blog and education resource.

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