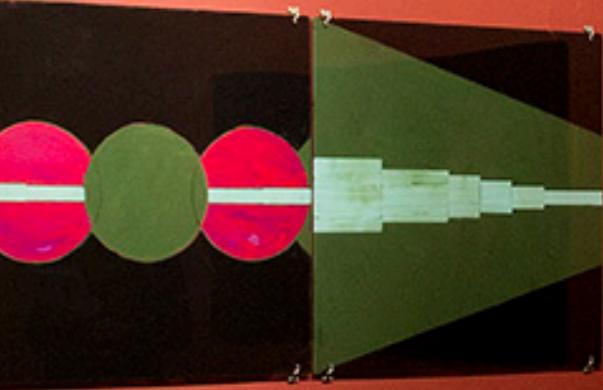


EREWTHON

Curated by Vikki McInnes



Learning Resource

**NETS
VICTORIA.**
National Exhibitions
Touring Support Victoria

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ABOUT THIS LEARNING GUIDE

This learning guide is intended for use as a starting point to generate discussion and activities before, during and after a visit to *Erewhon*. It is designed to be used in conjunction with information provided in the exhibition catalogue, gallery wall texts and on the NETS Victoria website. This resource includes an introduction with an introduction to the curator, Vikki McInnes, and some of the curatorial themes of the exhibition. The introduction is intended to provide points of departure for further discussion and research, before and after your visit to *Erewhon*.

Where possible links are provided to articles that would be suitable as reference for commentaries relevant to the VCE Art curriculum.

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

Before visiting *Erewhon* it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following.

- Opening hours, transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and admission fees
- Staff availability for introductory talks and tours
- Education and Public Programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition

Before your visit you may wish to discuss the following with your students

- Various issues covered in the introduction of this guide
- Your expectations for appropriate behaviour at a gallery, in regards to the safety of both students and artworks, and given that a gallery is a public space

CURRICULUM LINKS AND THEMES

Erewhon is relevant to many of the five Art subjects identified in the Australian Curriculum: Directly to Visual Art and Visual Communication, and also indirectly it may provide starting points for ideas that can be explored through Drama, Dance and Music.

Erewhon provides an ideal starting point from which to explore cross-curricula projects, fostering collaboration between teachers and students, across the areas of **intercultural understanding, civics, ethics and history**. The work of Brook Andrew is particularly relevant to the cross-curriculum priority of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures**. *Erewhon* is a new iteration of an exhibition that began as *Neverwhere*, an Asialink Arts project in collaboration with NETS Victoria, exhibited in Istanbul in 2015, and coinciding with the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign during the First World War. Turkey acts as a bridge between Europe and Asia, being the only country that belongs to both continents, and as such this exhibition (and particularly its conceptual development) addresses the cross-curriculum priority of **Asia and Australia's engagement with Asia**.

This document is broadly aimed at students from years 4 through to 10 and VCE Units 1-4, however the material may be easily tailored to suit younger students. The material is organised according to the Australian Curriculum for the Arts.

General Capabilities

Engagement with *Erewhon* provides students with opportunities to address the following general capabilities:

- Literacy
- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding

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- Artist's practice, ideas and inspiration
- Responding to Artworks: formal analysis, analytical frameworks and interpreting meanings and messages
- Exploring artists personal and cultural perspectives
- Exploring symbols and metaphors expressed in artworks
- Exploring possibilities for materials, processes and techniques
- Methods and consideration involved in the exhibition design

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- Researching and discussing how art reflects the personal interests, ideas, experiences and intensions of the artist

- Formulating and substantiating personal opinions with reference to artworks
- Investigating the practices of artists and applying these practices in their own work
- Applying the four analytical frameworks (Structural, Personal, Cultural and Contemporary) to analyse, interpret and compare artworks
- Using commentaries and viewpoints from a range of resources to examine and evaluate interpretations about an art idea and related issues
- Developing and applying skills in visual analysis, including the use of appropriate terminology in relation to artists studied.
- Researching how artists have interpreted ideas, sources of inspiration, and used materials and techniques
- Identifying, discussing and comparing use of art elements and aesthetic qualities in contemporary artworks
- Identifying and describing the characteristics of different types of gallery spaces, comparing methods of exhibiting artworks

Career pathways in the art industry

Throughout this resource there are examples of study pathways and professional experience that can be instructive in developing ideas for career pathways for students in a variety of disciplines.

Issues, ideas and viewpoints in Art for VCE Art Unit 4

The introductory section of this guide explores various issues raised in the exhibition. These include perceptions of **otherness** (in reference to communities both within and exterior to our national boundaries); the role of art and literature in **reflecting on and re-visioning society**; the exhibition also provides opportunities to discuss career pathways in the arts, employability, and therefore to examine the current round of **cuts to student loans for VET arts diplomas**, and Education Minister Simon Birmingham's comments that art is a 'lifestyle' choice, questioning its economic validity and the 'legitimacy' of art students.¹ A recent (22 October 2016) article titled *I was surprised to learn my career is actually a 'lifestyle choice'* by James

¹
Jo Caust, Arts training is an essential part of an innovative nation, 19 October 2016, <http://theconversation.com/arts-training-is-an-essential-part-of-an-innovative-nation-67303>

Norman in the *Sydney Morning Herald* is a good starting point for discussion (see references for a link).

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In the new 2017-21 VCA Art Study Design, these issues are relevant to the Unit 4 study area of *Artworks, ideas and viewpoints*.

INTRODUCTION

Use this section to provide points of departure for discussion and research, before and after your visit to *Erewhon*.



The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) invited Asialink Arts to participate in the 2015 *Australia in Turkey* program, which celebrated the centenary of the ANZAC campaign at Gallipoli during the First World War. Asialink Arts invited curator Vikki McInnes to create an exhibition to be shown in Istanbul in 2015. McInnes curated the exhibition titled *Neverwhere* for this purpose. The National Exhibition Support Victoria (NETS) asked McInnes to tour the exhibition in Australia, and she created a new exhibition, *Erewhon*, developed out of that earlier exhibition, which was designed especially for Australian audiences.

About the Curator

Vikki McInnes was born in New Zealand in 1969, and has worked in Victoria's contemporary arts sector since 1996. After leaving school McInnes began studying law, (her father was a lawyer and her mother was an English teacher). After her early departure from law school she spent several years in the UK and Europe where her passion for contemporary art was ignited. She returned home to study Art History in Wellington, and then moved to Melbourne to undertake Curatorial Studies at Melbourne University.

“I think my interest in art came about through a curiosity about society, about how we look at ourselves, what we think about ourselves and how we reflect ourselves back to one another. I had an inclination to ask questions from an early age, and my parents always encouraged me to think about social issues. My curatorial practice isn't necessarily focussed on social issues, but it's contextualised within the contemporary moment. [Erewhon] is a good example of that I think. I've become interested in work that's not necessarily issues based – a lot of the work I'm interested in is materially focused or conceptually placed – but without exception the work that I respond to has something to say about our current moment.”²

When McInnes arrived in Melbourne, one of the first things that she did was to volunteer at The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA). At that time ACCA was situated in an elegant Victorian villa in Melbourne's Botanic Gardens.

²
Vikki McInnes,
interview with
Kate Stones,
3 November 2016

Soon she began working full time at ACCA, and continued in various roles for another seven years, eventually becoming Program Manager. McInnes oversaw the transition to the new, and much larger purpose-built gallery in between the Victorian College of the Arts (VCA) and the Malthouse Theatre. Since 2005 McInnes has worked at the VCA (University of Melbourne) where she was Director of the Margaret Lawrence Gallery, and is now Managing Editor of *Art and Australia*, an art magazine that has been in publication for over one hundred years. In 2005 McInnes received an Australia Council Skills and Development Grant to visit university galleries in Europe. She visited Goldsmiths College in London, Glasgow School of Art, The University of the Arts (UDK) in Berlin and the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. In her role as a curator McInnes has written numerous catalogue essays, and she has also written many articles for major art publications including *Art Monthly*, *Photofile*, *un Magazine* and *Art Collector*. She has co-edited four collections of writings on contemporary art: *Red* (2001, with Stuart Koop), *Bureau* (2009, with Kate Daw), *Fabrication* (2010, with Kate Barber) and *Bureau 2* (2014, with Laura Castagnini).

In 2009, with her colleague and friend Kate Barber, McInnes established Sarah Scout Presents, an independent commercial gallery in the heart of inner city Melbourne.

“We had both just become mothers, and we were starting to think about how we might function in the art world in this new context. We were looking to feminist strategies to solve the practical issue of continuing to work professionally, and collaborating was an obvious choice. We became conscious that a lot of the contemporary work that we were engaged with and responded to, was made by women, none of whom were represented in a commercial context. It seemed so inequitable, that there were so many women going through art school, but they weren’t being represented or shown in state institutions, so we started Sarah Scout Presents with that in mind. We represent 25 artists now and 19 of those are women. We were very conscious of opening up opportunities for women, especially women like Bianca Hester, Susan Jacobs and Lou Hubbard; artists who were really engaged within the critical discourse and very influential in the art community in

Melbourne, but had no support or commercial basis for their practice.”³

A second Australia Council grant enabled McInnes to conduct a research trip in India in 2012. The grant allowed her to travel to India with a group of seven curators and artists to forge connections and create opportunities for artists across both countries.

McInnes was invited by Asialink Arts to propose an exhibition to be part of the cultural program *Australia in Turkey*, which was funded by DFAT. A gallery in Istanbul had offered its space for an exhibition. McInnes selected a number of Australian artists who were already active in a global context – who had previously had international exhibitions and or residencies. Their work formed part of a conversation about Australian art, with references to identity. She selected artists whose work made reference to the political and social conditions in Australia, but was also accessible to an international audience. The title of the exhibition *Neverwhere* came from a dark fantasy novel and television series about a man who discovers an underground version of London, ‘London Below’, which exists below the city, in which dark mythical and magical forces are at play, inhabited by those who had ‘fallen through the cracks’ in ‘London Above’. The idea of ‘above and below’ was important to McInnes, reflecting a conscious, overt world in contrast to a parallel, dreamlike reality.

When the National Exhibition Touring Support Victoria (NETS) approached McInnes with the idea of touring the exhibition to various regional galleries in Victoria, she felt that there ‘was more to be said about certain aspects of the show’, and so she developed an new version of the exhibition *Erewhon*.

Asialink Arts

Asialink is a centre for the promotion of public understanding of the countries of Asia and of Australia’s role in the region. Asialink was established in 1990, and has its offices at Melbourne University, with whom it is affiliated. The organisation provides information, training and professional networks specifically in the areas of

international cross-cultural collaborations, leadership training, education, community health and cultural programs. Asialink's stated purpose is "to build an Asia-capable, deeply Asia-engaged Australia through thought leadership and innovative programs that build knowledge, skills and partnerships."

Asialink is a joint initiative of the Australian Government's Commission for the Future and the Myer Foundation, one of Australia's oldest and largest philanthropic organisations.⁴

4
Asialink website
<http://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/about-us/what-we-do>

Centenary of Gallipoli: Australia's relationship with Turkey, a cultural exchange

The first version of this exhibition, *Neverwhere*, was originally designed to be part of a program that celebrated the centenary of the ANZAC campaign in Gallipoli, during the First World War. The site of the landing is now known as ANZAC Cove. ANZAC troops landed on 25th April 1915, and were finally withdrawn after eight months of heavy fighting. This conflict has become very significant for both Australia and Turkey. For Turkey the confidence gained at Gallipoli became the foundation for the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923), and for Australia and New Zealand the Gallipoli campaign was the first major military action undertaken as independent 'dominions' of the British Colonies. ANZAC Day is celebrated on the day of the landing at ANZAC Cove. At various anniversaries over the last century, veterans have made pilgrimages back to Gallipoli, and forged relationships that have, to some extent, healed the scars of war, allowing people of both nations to grieve their losses together. The title of the first exhibition *Neverwhere*, with its indication of time and place, or rather no time and no place, illustrates a fundamental examination of the concepts of national identity and conflicts over national borders; of how national identities can be constructed, reinforced and entrenched, and then challenged.

Utopias and Dystopias, alternate realities

The worlds of fantasy and satire provide ways for writers and thinkers to comment on contemporary social issues. They can weave idealistic visions or deliver biting social critique.

Neverwhere, written by Neil Gaiman creates a dark world inhabited by dispossessed characters, refugees from different historical times, and mythical realities. The setting of the novel is cast in a fantasy style Steam Punk aesthetic. Steam Punk plays with time, imagining an alternate world, similar to our own, but darker and yet somehow more magical, romantic and nostalgic.

‘Erewhon’ was written in 1872 by Samuel Butler, who spent his early life in New Zealand. The word itself is an (imprecise) inversion of the word ‘nowhere’. It’s a satirical novel about a world, which reversed aspects of Butler’s world of Victorian society, particularly crime and punishment, religion and science. For example, according to Erewhonian law, offenders were treated as if they were ill, whereas ill people were looked upon as criminals. Another feature of Erewhon was the absence of machines due to the widely shared belief by the Erewhonians that they were potentially dangerous. These ideas – among others (technological progress, the impossibility of utopias, the effects of colonization, discipline and control) – form both the thesis and the point of departure for the exhibition *Erewhon*.⁵

Curator Vikki McInnes reflects on how contemporary national and international events influenced way in which she developed Erewhon for Australian audiences:

“...It came out of thinking over the past year about a lot of different episodes and factors globally, and locally that had had an impact – for example the day we arrived in Istanbul there were two terror attacks, and in the past year there have been such a large number of terror attacks, in Turkey, in France and more broadly. I felt that there was a new sense of anxiety around the threat of terror, especially among my colleagues who travel a lot (artists and curators). Other domestic issues were also resonating with me: Rosie Batty was made Australian of the Year and domestic violence was finally being discussed among with community. It was as if the edges of society felt quite frayed – so that was the thinking – to focus on the darker rather than the more playful aspects of the show in Istanbul. Having said that there’s certainly humour in some of the work...”⁶

5
NETS Victoria website
[http://netsvictoria.org.
au/exhibition/erewhon/](http://netsvictoria.org.au/exhibition/erewhon/)

6
Op Cit

Starting points for discussion and research

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- What is DFAT? What function does it serve?
- How is ANZAC Day celebrated? Research its history – has it always been celebrated in the same way? What social and historical contexts influence the way we celebrate ANZAC Day, and its popularity, or lack of it.
- Research the history of the book after which this exhibition is named: *Erewhon*, by Samuel Butler. Find out some facts about its author. You can find the text online. Read and discuss some of the chapters
- Explore the terms ‘Utopia’ and ‘Dystopia’. What do they mean? What other examples can you find of Utopic or Dystopic narratives in literature or film.
- Discuss the specific aesthetic qualities of Steam Punk. Think about issues of time, space and technology. Think about other examples of stories or popular culture where this style is used. Why do you think it is popular today? What does it have to say about our contemporary times?
- What does it mean to express dark themes, such as violence or criminality, in visual art or literature, or other art forms? What ethical issues ought to be considered around that? What is the difference between representations of violence and criminality in art works and galleries, and representations in the news media? How do the images affect the viewer differently in different contexts?

ARTISTS AND ACTIVITIES



1. Brook Andrew

Artists Background

Brook Andrew was born in 1970, in Sydney, of the *Wiradjuri* nation. He has lived and worked in Melbourne since 2004. Before settling in the area of visual art, he spent a brief time studying Interior Design, and his work as a visual artist reflects an innate sensitivity to space and environment. His artwork utilises a broad range of materials to explore themes of memory and culture, historical amnesia, power structures and stereotyping.

“My work challenges cultural and historical perceptions, using installation, text and image to comment on local and global issues regarding race, consumerism and history. Apart from drawing inspiration from public media and found archival collections, I travel nationally and internationally to work with communities and museum collections and displays to comment and create new work reflecting objects, concepts and local thought.” (Brook Andrew)

Andrew works at a variety of scales, creating large-scale installations in public sites such as Sydney International Airport Terminal (22 neon boomerangs titled *Wilbing (to fly)* 1999-2000); He uses neon tubes to create suspended sculptures that can subtly inhabit gallery buildings, blending into interior design features or drawing attention with their eerie glow. Other materials utilised include existing images from postcards, and other found cultural material, from different periods in history – some very rare and old, some from more recent times. Andrew has a particular interest in the way that information and artefacts are arranged in museums and collections, and how these affect the reading of the information. His research has taken him to many different locations internationally to examine different institutions. He has travelled to France, The Netherlands, Lithuania, India and Chile. This gives his work a broad, global perspective. Whether in photography, neon, sculpture or screen-print, Andrew explores power relationships in society, especially in race relations and globalism.

A previous example of Andrew’s exploration of artefacts and ethnographic materials is the work *Vox: Beyond Tasmania*, 2013 (included in the *Melbourne Now* exhibition, at the

National Gallery of Victoria). The term ‘ethnography’ refers to the study of people and cultures. *Vox: Beyond Tasmania* brought together archival records, ‘de-contextualised anthropological artefacts’ and sculpture. It uses a large traditional museum case to present the archival material. The ‘anthropological artefacts’ referred to are the bones of Indigenous Tasmanian people that have been taken from their original resting place and collected and traded. The bones were set out in the museum case in the shape of a person, and outside the case, a giant gramophone horn seemed to amplify their voice.

“Brook Andrew’s work with archival material has created debate and new thought surrounding contemporary philosophies regarding memory, its conceptual and visual potency linking local with international histories. By co-opting the tools of advertising, the media, museums and Wiradjuri language and culture, Brook Andrew’s art challenges the limitations imposed by power structures, historical amnesia, stereotyping and complicity.”
(Laura Murray Cree, *Artist Profile* Issue 11, 2010)

Find another article about Brook Andrew’s work by Anthony Gardner, here → http://www.artandaustralia.com.au/article.asp?issue_id=191&article_id=242

Brook Andrew is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne, Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels.

Artworks

Harvest

2015

Victorian redgum, carbonised Victorian redgum, glass, brass, books, postcards, objects and ephemera from the artist’s personal archive.

Dimensions variable

The Memory Archive

2015

Neon, carbonised hardwood timber-stretcher, records, newspaper, rope, gelatine silver photograph, screenprint on

brown paper, felt tip pen on cardboard, A4 paper on plastic clipboards, coloured foil, decorated text leaf on vellum, magazine, books and postcards.
Dimensions variable

Brook Andrews gathers together objects to form installations. The objects come from existing collections; in this case from the artists own collection of objects. When people collect objects and images, they draw relationships between these items that begin to tell a story. Every collection has a story to tell. Brook Andrews examines and critiques the stories that are woven into various collections of historical artifacts. He explores our relationship with history and re-contextualises artifacts to explore alternative narratives.

Responding (address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- Compare Brook Andrew's two works, *Harvest* and *The Memory Archive*. Both these works feature a collection of objects, but they are presented in different ways. What is the impact of the glass cabinet in *Harvest*? How does it affect the meaning of the work?
- Examine the objects in the installation. Are there any that you think have been built or created or changed by the artist? Which ones? Why do you think the artist included them?
- Discuss the term 'ethnography'. It is the study of people and cultures. Who is doing the studying and who is being studied? What does it mean to 'study' someone? What does it mean to be 'studied'? What does it feel like?
- Many of the objects in the installation were not originally intended to be shown in an art gallery. How does their meaning shift and change when they are placed in a gallery? If this installation was in a museum, how would its meaning change?
- What stories or narratives is the artist presenting, through the presentation of the objects together?
- How does history and memory affect us in the present moment, and in the future?
- How do you think Brook Andrew has considered colour and shape when creating this installation?
- Think about the two works in the gallery space, how do they relate to each other? How are the objects similar and different?

- How are animals represented in the artworks? What is the artist saying about the relationship between humans and animals?

Making

- Take a look around your room at home, or the special place where you keep your 'stuff'. Consider the objects and images there. What do they say about your identity? Imagine you were studying these objects from an 'ethnographic' perspective. Write an ethnographic report about your objects, and the person they belong to.
- Create your own installation by putting together a series of objects. What stories do your objects tell when placed together? Consider the different ways that you might display them. How will the method of display impact on their meaning?
- Visit a museum and ask yourself what stories are being told in the displays? If the displays were in an art gallery, how would you interpret them?

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- What is the relationship between the past and the present in Brook Andrew's installations? In what ways do the artworks reflect on our contemporary moment in history?
- Consider the installation from a structural point of view. Which of the art elements has the artist engaged most strongly with?
- What specific social issues does the artist engage with in these installations? There are a number of them. How are these issues woven into the artist's personal life experience?
- Brook Andrews is currently undertaking a three-year international research trip to investigate sites of genocide, supported by an Australian Research Council grant. He is examining sites such as 'The Killing Fields' in Cambodia. What role can artists play in defining and redefining our histories? How have they done this in the past?

2. Mikala Dwyer and Justene Williams in collaboration

Artists Background: Mikala Dwyer

Mikala Dwyer was born in 1959, and lives and works in Sydney. She is well known for her sculptural and installation-based work, and also makes live performances and videos. She completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (Sculpture/Sound) at Sydney College of the Arts in 1983, studied at Middlesex Polytechnic in London, and went on to complete her Masters of Fine Arts in 1993 at the College of Fine Arts, University New South Wales. Dwyer is represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery in Melbourne, and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery in Sydney. Internationally she is represented by Hamish McKay Gallery in Wellington and Hamish Morrison Galerie in Berlin. She has had solo shows at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. She has also participated in the Sydney and Adelaide Biennales.

Influenced by ideas from science, architecture and mythology, Dwyer's work is full of uncertainties and contradictions, it has been described as 'profoundly sociable'; she asks viewers to come in, participate, and find their own meanings. She draws our attention to the unseen – to invisible materials such as helium, or the spaces between her forms, and also to hidden histories and our own personal relationships with the mysteries of magic, memory, sexuality and ritual. The materials she favours (fabric, inflatables, ceramic, paint and organic matter) give her works a playful feel, but they often suggest something darker beneath the surface.

In 2013 Dwyer was invited to create a large-scale installation for The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art. The exhibition formed part of an on-going series of exhibitions titled Influential Australian Artists, which celebrates the works of artists who have made a significant contribution to the history of Australian art practice. Her exhibition, Goldene Bend'er occupied all three gallery spaces at ACCA, with works that explored the body, transition and transformation.

A video interview with Dwyer can be found here
→ <https://www.accaonline.org.au/exhibition/mikala-dwyer-goldene-bender>

An Age article about Dwyer's exhibition at ACCA by Andrew Stephens, (25 May 2013) can be found here → <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/pushing-boundaries-with-public-look-at-private-act-20130524-2k6lz.html>

“Dwyer has always been intrigued by the occult, and, in recent years, she's merged this focus with an examination of Australia's violent past. Her psychic spaces are ciphers for a particular kind of Australasian experience, and, like all good codes, they take a long time to crack. This is also what makes them so difficult to write about, let alone curate. The Institute of Modern Art's 2012 survey exhibition of her work, *Drawing Down the Moon*, is a perfect example: a retrospective that sought to expose the serious systems underpinning Dwyer's playful, supernatural world. But the show also confirmed that, no matter how hard one tries to control it, Dwyer's practice exists permanently on the edge of escape.”⁷

Artists Background: Justene Williams

Justine Williams was born in 1970 in Sydney, where she continues to live and work. Growing up in the suburbs, Williams was engaged in a performative practice from a young age, experimenting with cabaret as a teenager. After finishing high school, Williams went straight to art school, undertaking a bachelor of Visual Arts at the University of Western Sydney. She completed her a Master of Visual Arts at Sydney College of the Arts in 2006. Although Williams has exhibited widely throughout Australia and internationally and undertaken several artist residencies, she has also spent a large part of her adult life working in the fashion retail industry, and this has had a significant impact on her practice.⁸ Developing a strong sense of costuming and fashion, being asked to produce enticing window displays with practically no budget, exploring her father's wrecking yard – these were the early influences that had an impact on Williams aesthetic sensibility. Williams now uses many found objects and practical materials such as plastic, paper and cardboard, to create elaborate and inventive sets and costumes for her video and performance works. Williams' work also displays influences from the early twentieth century art movement Dada. Dada was one of the first art movements to question traditional ideas about the intrinsic

7
Anthony Byrt, 'Prism Break', Mikala Dwyer, *Drawing Down the Moon*, exhibition catalogue, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2014, pp7-13

8
Tracey Clement, Justene Williams: Dumpster Diva, *Art Collector Magazine* issue 46, Oct-Dec 2008
<http://www.artcollector.net.au/JusteneWilliams/DumpsterDiva>

value of materials, archival sustainability, and the grand artistic gesture. The Dada movement formed an oppositional stance against the traditional art market, consumerism and elitism in art, using photography, found objects, collage and assemblage as key strategies. Dada artists also experimented with new approaches to theatre and performance, creating elaborate costumes that redefined the natural contours of the body, and alluded to ritual. Williams was originally drawn to photography, for its speed and compact format, it was a practical solution for an artist working without a studio space. In an early interview for *Art Collector* magazine she spoke about her use of photography as a medium: “I was always working in retail. It was the easiest thing to do. I was always snapping away in the shopping mall. It was quick. I loved the speed.” As her practice developed, she began working with video performance, as a way to animate the silent medium of photography, introducing rhythm, movement, sound and costume.⁹

9
Ibid

Williams now makes multi-channel videos, often combining one-off performances and installations, to examine through images how history is both remembered and forgotten. Her works draw numerous sources for their subject material from early twentieth-century avant-garde art and theatre, tribal belief systems, her personal experience of dance classes, time spent in her father’s wrecking yard, to contemporary popular culture.

Over the summer of 2015/16 Williams work was featured in an exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria. You can find a video interview with her via the NGV website here
→ <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/pleasure-reality/>

A recent video installation, *The Curtain Breathed Deeply*, 2015, was commissioned by Monash University Museum of Art. The exhibition paid tribute to the life and work of Williams father, using the image of the hospital curtain that marked the final stage of his life when he passed away from mesothelioma. *The Curtain Breathed Deeply* was an acknowledgement of the life of a loved one, whilst also taking pleasure in the movement of living, breathing, sexual beings, with curtains and screens acting as thresholds between one realm and another.¹⁰

10
Monash University
Museum of Art website
<https://www.monash.edu/muma/rhs-modules/muma/exhibitions/2016/justene-williams>

Williams work as been exhibited widely throughout Australia and internationally, including in the 20th Biennale of Sydney 2016, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2015; Artspace, Sydney, 2014; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, 2013; Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2013; La Centrale Powerhouse Gallery, Montreal, 2012; and the Barbican Center, London, 2011 among others.

Justene Williams is represented by Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

Artwork

Captain Thunderbolt's Sisters & Red Rockers, 2010

Dual-channel Standard Definition video

9.49 mins (looped), 4:3, black and white, sound/4:08 mins (looped), 4:3, colour, silent

Captain Thurderbolt's Sisters & Red Rockers was created for the 2010 Sydney Biennale. The video work explores the history of the buildings of Cockatoo Island in Sydney's Harbour, originally a penal colony, and now the major site for the Sydney Biennale. In a catalogue essay Anthony Byrt explores the history of Cockatoo Island, and Dwyer's relationship to it:

“Dwyer grew up in Sydney, not far from Cockatoo Island, in a house her parents got cheaply because local residents had (among other issues) to contend with occasional prison escapees running through their backyards. Thus, even before she was invited to spend six months on Cockatoo in the lead-up to the 2010 Sydney Biennale, this was embedded in her psyche. The island is inextricably linked to Australia's convict history, first as a prison and later as a reform school for 'wayward girls'—a euphemistic way to describe a detention centre for young women on the wrong side of the law. It was also a major shipyard, and the hulking, rusted traces of that period are still everywhere to see.

Many of Cockatoo's past lives coalesce in a single legend: the story of Captain Thunderbolt, aka Fred Ward, and his lover Mary Ann Bugg. Ward, a

bushranger, had been sentenced for cattle rustling but managed to escape from the island in 1863 with the help of Bugg, who allegedly swam across Sydney's shark-infested harbour to spring him. The daughter of an Aboriginal mother and an Essex-born convict-turned-shepherd, Bugg was a physical manifestation of colonial Australia's shadow-side: a bolshy, black, lovestruck girl with criminality running in her veins.

During her time on Cockatoo, Dwyer allowed the dead lovers to possess her thoughts, using them to evoke the female ghosts of Cockatoo's past—especially the detained teenage girls, many of whom suffered considerably during the 'reform' process. The most explicit example of this is *Captain Thunderbolt's Sisters* (2010), a video Dwyer made in collaboration with Justene Williams. In it, the two artists clamber around a circular bunker on Cockatoo, dressed in striped prison outfits, giant 'Ned Kelly' helmets, and glam heels, clanging its metal fixtures with hammers. It's unclear whether the work should be read as the artists trying to raise the island's dead, the girls themselves brought back to life, or as interstitial figures—the artists, but possessed by the girls' spirits. Ned Kelly's helmet is a ubiquitous signifier of outlaw freedom in Australian culture: something to be feared, but also celebrated. One of the most intriguing aspects of Kelly's headgear is the way it's caught between the industrial and the homespun—an appropriate appendage for a figure walking the line between myth and modernity. The anonymity it afforded him acted both as a threat and a measure of self-protection against authoritarianism, allowing him to become a phantom in a landscape that was yet to be fully conquered...

...Dwyer and Williams's use of the Kelly/Thunderbolt archetype sets up a direct conversation with this period of Australian art history. In merging modernism and Aussie folklore, they seem to be following Nolan's lead, but an important distinction is that they knowingly feminise both. They do something similar in the video *Red Rockers* (2010), in which they shuffle around a Cockatoo Island cave on hands and knees, dressed in sparkly red constructivist suits. By becoming girly, proto-formalist bushrangers, they

undermine the bravado of colonial mythology and twentieth-century art simultaneously, infecting both with the transgressive female agency that is such an undervalued aspect of Australia's outlaw past.”¹¹

Responding (address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- Explore the art movement Dada, and some of the artists who were involved in that movement. Look at the costume and performance work of Oskar Schlemmer in particular. What social and political conditions did Dada arise from? What role did female artists play in Dada? Find the specific ways that Dada has influenced Justene Williams. Do you think that Dada has also influenced the work of Mikala Dwyer? If so, how?
- Compare the work of Mikala Dwyer and Justene Williams. In what ways are artistic practices similar? In what ways are they different? Why do you think they were interested in working together? What do you think the opportunities and challenges would be in collaborating with another artist?
- The two film clips in this installation are displayed in different ways; discuss the impact of the different formats and technologies used to display the footage. How does it impact on the meaning of the work, and the way you see the images?
- In these video works the faces of the artists/performers are covered. How does this affect your perception of their bodies? What would it be like if you could see their faces? How does the shape of the costume affect the meaning of the artwork?
- How have the artists used humour in these performance works? What makes them funny?

Making

- Get together with a friend or classmate to make a collaborative project. Find someone you get on with, and whose artwork you like. Maybe they have similar interests to you, maybe they like to use similar materials, or maybe they like to work in a different medium, or even a different art form. What form will your collaboration take? How will you work together? How will you deal with disagreements, if they arise?
- Create a site specific performance work. You could work

solo, or with a partner, or a larger group. Perhaps it could be a class project. Find a local site, at school or close by. Choose somewhere interesting, and atmospheric, somewhere that has a history, recent or much older. Research the history of the site; find out some facts about the building or place. Make some drawings of the site. Imagine the events that might have happened there. Who would have inhabited the site? Use your research to inspire your imagination. Explore your emotional response to the site. Discuss and write about your impressions. Explore actions and costumes that could represent your response to the site. Plan your performance. Do you want an audience? Or will you film the performance? Or both? Find an appropriate way to document your work.

VCE Art/Studio Art

- What are the aesthetic qualities of sound in these video performance works?
- Examine and reflect on Anthony Byrt's text about this artwork. Do you agree with his interpretations?

3. Tony Garifalakis

Artists Background

Tony Garifalakis was born 1964 in Melbourne, where he continues to live and work. He completed a Masters of Fine Art (Painting) at RMIT University in 2000. Garifalakis works across a number of different mediums including photography, collage, sculpture and installation. His works often incorporate text. He is interested in using his artwork to question the power and legitimacy of political, social, religious and artistic institutions. Garifalakis explores hierarchy and status, and how this is expressed through images, symbols and texts that appear in our daily lives and environments, and are infused throughout popular culture. He uses juxtaposition of images, text and materials that appear incongruous, to subvert power structures through the use of dark humour.

Some of his recent projects include *Anti-Christ*s (2011), a project examining various conspiracy theories, specifically the attempts made to identify and name the Anti-Christ; and *Mob Rule* (2014), in which portraits of powerful figures such

as heads of state, royalty and military leaders are obscured with black paint. These works are reflective of the artist's broader concerns around the signification of authority and the legitimacy of those who wield it.

Find an interview with Tony Garifalakis about his work in the Melbourne New exhibition, on the National Gallery of Victoria website here → <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/multimedia/tony-garifalakis/>

Recent solo exhibitions include at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne and Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide, all 2014; Daine Singer, Melbourne, 2012; Curro Y Poncho, Guadalajara, Mexico and Yautepec Gallery, Mexico City, both 2011. His work has been presented in a number of major curatorial projects and group exhibitions, including *Pleasure and Reality*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2015; *Dark Heart*, the Adelaide Biennial of Australian art, 2014; *Whisper in my Mask*, TarraWarra Biennial, TarraWarra Museum of Art, 2014; *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, 2013; *Theatre of the world*, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, 2012; and *Negotiating this world: contemporary Australian art*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2012. Tony Garifalakis is represented by Hugo Michell Gallery, Adelaide and Sarah Scout Presents. Melbourne.

Artworks

Auscam

From the series *Hills Have Eyes*, 2014
Fabric collage, 177 × 112cm

Desert

From the series *Hills Have Eyes*, 2012
Fabric collage, 177 × 112cm

Woodland

From the series *Hills Have Eyes*, 2012
Fabric collage, 177 × 112cm

Better

From the series *Affirmations*, 2012
Adhesive vinyl on paper shooting target (framed)
87.5 × 56.5cm

Accept

From the series *Affirmations*, 2012
Adhesive vinyl on paper shooting target (framed)
87.5 × 56.5cm

Divine

From the series *Affirmations*, 2012
Adhesive vinyl on paper shooting target (framed)
87.5 × 56.5cm

W.P.L.

2016
Adhesive vinyl on paper shooting target
Oak, acrylic, steel
Dimensions variable

The works from the series *Hills Have Eyes*, are related to the previous works in the *Mob Rule* series (2014), in which Garifalakis took images and posters of military and royal figures, and obscured their faces with black spray enamel paint, leaving their eyes, mouths and hair exposed. In *Hills Have Eyes*, he uses large expanses of military camouflage material, and collaged images of eyes, which seem to emerge from behind the fabric.

Tony Garifalakis' *Affirmations* is a series of collages that explore the belief systems that underpin the New Age movement and gun culture groups. The images of people holding guns are real target practice images sourced from shooting galleries. The phrases that are superimposed over the top of these images are taken from a variety of New Age and self-help sources such as positive affirmation cards, books of aphorisms and bumper stickers.

Responding (address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- Discuss the contrast between image and text in Tony Garifalakis' *Affirmations* series. How do the images affect the meaning of the words? How do the words affect the meaning of the images? Discuss the meaning that the artist wants to convey.
- What emotions arise for you when you look at the artworks in the *Affirmations* series?
- Is collage an effective technique with which to express political or subversive ideas? How would the meaning of

these works change, if they were painted? Why has the artist used glitter in these works?

- Research the history of collage. Find other examples of how this technique has been used to make social commentary. Why do you think collage is used in this way?
- Discuss gun culture in Australia and America. What is your position on who should be allowed to own and use guns? What do you think about the police carrying guns? Are there countries where police do not carry guns?
- Do you think there is a relationship between the *Hills Have Eyes* series and the *Affirmations* series? What are the similarities?
- In *The Hills Have Eyes*, do you see the eyes as being behind the fabric or being part of it? How does the meaning of the work change, when you shift your perspective about the position of the eyes?

Making

- Experiment with incorporating found text into your artwork. Take a piece of text and place it against three different and contrasting images. How does the meaning of the text and the image change?

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Tony Garifalakis often works in series, where works have the same structure, use the same materials and techniques, but incorporate individual differences. Consider how these works would function differently if there were singular, or if they were multiples of the same image. Discuss the artist's specific approach to repetition – how does it effect the meanings and messages contained in his work?
- Throughout his career Garifalakis has mined books, film and popular culture and explored society's follies and anxieties through recurrent themes of conspiracy theories, extremism, anarchism, cults and the apocalypse. Notice how images and words are used in popular culture to reinforce ideas about our reality and identity. Where do you find them most often? Gather some examples and consider how you might use them to create an artwork that questions their meaning.

4. Claire Lambe

Artists Background

Claire Lambe was born in 1962, in Macclesfield, in the North of England. Lambe completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at Bristol College of Art in 1985, then came to Australia to complete a her postgraduate studies at the University of New South Wales in 1990. In 1995 she went to London to complete a Master of Fine Art at Goldsmiths College. She now lives and works in Melbourne.

Claire Lambe creates sculptural installations combining built forms, found objects and photography to disrupt conventional notions of gender, class and sexuality. Her work is influenced by her experience growing up in the 1970s in England, attending art school – she describes the experience in an interview for the National Gallery of Victoria: ‘we were taught how to weld, it was hardcore modernism’, – going to clubs and watching politically incorrect TV shows such as Benny Hill. The atmosphere was both freeing and also dangerous. Her work focuses on the female body, examining underlying narratives of sexuality, violence and social discontent.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Beadlestaff*, Switchback Gallery presented by Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne, 2011, and *Lazyboy*, Sarah Scout, Melbourne, 2012. Group exhibitions include *Ertographomania*, CAST Gallery, Hobart, 2010; *Yakety Sax*, with Lou Hubbard, Sarah Scout, 2011; *Strangefellows*, with Lisa Young, West Space, Melbourne, 2013; and *Like Mike*, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts, Melbourne, 2013. Lambe was co-founder of *Death Be Kind*, an artist run project that ran from 2010 to 2011 in Brunswick, Melbourne. Claire Lambe is represented by Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne.

Find an interview here, with Claire Lambe in which she speaks about her background as a young person in the North of England in the 1970s, and how it has influenced her practice as an artist

→ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3gV6dDTX7Fw>

In 2015 Lambe was included in an exhibition of surrealist art called *Lurid Beauty* at The National Gallery of Victoria. Here is a review of the exhibition, placing Lambe’s work in both a historical and contemporary context.

→ <http://www.theage.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/women-artists-smash-surrealist-stereotypes-in-lurid-beauty-exhibition-at-the-national-gallery-of-victoria-20151008-gk4nw3.html>

Artworks

Miss Universal

2015

Digital print (with Phebe Schmidt), welded mild steel frame, casters, metal clamps

forbidden fruit

From the Alteration series

2014

Hand carved wooden torso, wood textile, mild steel stand, umbrella

Miss Universal explores the representation women historically and in the present moment. The image is a re-staging of a promotional image from 1976 of the exotic dancers who worked in the infamous Paris cabaret, Crazy Horse. In *forbidden fruit* the artist combines photography, sculpture and assemblage to create an uncanny installation that poses questions about desire and the gaze.

Responding (address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- The women represented in *Miss Universal* have their feet covered in clay. Why do you think the artist has used clay in this way? What does the phrase 'feet of clay' mean?
- Why do you think the artist has shown the women with their backs to the camera? How does that affect the way we view the women?
- The artist has costumed the women in very specific ways. They wear swimming hats and red stockings. What activities might they be dressed for? Are they about to perform? The artist seems to be playing with ideas about what is possible and what is impossible. What feeling is created for the viewer?
- Think about the titles of Claire Lambs' artworks. Where do they come from? How do they relate to the images and objects that comprise these sculptural and photographic installations?
- In the artwork *forbidden fruit*, think about the way the

artist has used space. How does that change as you move around the installation?

- How is scale used in this artwork?

Making

- Both these artworks feature depersonalised images of women. Think about how women are represented in our contemporary world, and create an artwork in response to that.

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Research the original image that Miss Universal is based on. What elements has the artist changed? How has this changed the message that the image carries? What message did the original image convey about women?
- How does Claire Lambe's work fit into feminist art? Find some contemporary examples of feminist art work and compare it to Lambe's work. Research the history of feminism in art.

5. Clare Milledge

Artists Background

Clare Milledge was born in 1970 in Sydney, where she now lives and works. Milledge completed her Doctor of Philosophy at Sydney College of the Arts, the University of Sydney in 2012. Part of her candidacy was spent at the *Universität der Künste*, Berlin; she completed her Honours year at the Statens Kunst Akademi in Oslo and maintains an active engagement with Norwegian contemporary art. Milledge produces installations comprising paintings, textiles and sculptures. They explore society's relationship to science, nature and language. She often invites collaborators to stage experimental performances within her installations. Milledge's work centres around the technique *Hinterglasmalerei*, popular in the nineteenth-century. This painting onto glass, the final works being displayed with the smooth, reflective surface facing out to the viewer. Text also features strongly in her work. Many of her paintings include text, and the titles she chooses for individual works and collections inform and add to the concepts that the work explores.¹²

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Astrid Lorange,
'Reading Paintings and
Poetry,' Blackbox
Manifold, issue 16,
[http://www.manifold.
group.shef.ac.uk/
issue16/AstridLorange
EssayBM16.pdf](http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/issue16/AstridLorangeEssayBM16.pdf)

In the following statement, taken from the abstract of her PhD thesis, Milledge explores the notion of the artist as a 'shaman', a member of the community who acts as an intermediary between the physical and metaphysical worlds. She contrasts the personality of the heroic artist/shaman with the ambivalent artist/shaman.

“Throughout the history of art the role of the artist has been compared to the role of the shaman. This is because the artist’s role has always been one of mediator, transformer and most prominently visionary. The role of both the artist and shaman has always been to stand between two worlds: that of the visible and the invisible. The viewers, or the community in the case of the shaman, entrust the artist to go forth into the realm of the invisible and return with a gift: the invisible transformed into the visible. Traditionally, many artists associated with shamanism such as Joseph Beuys, Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington and later Matthew Barney, have been leaders, idealists, heroes of mythic proportions, artists who return with this gift: a vision or sight to follow. But a different breed of artist associated with shamanism also exists: an ambivalent artist-shaman, a shifty and unreliable character of dubious motivations, who appears to offer the viewer a vision or sight and then throws it back in their face, makes them decide. This is the role that Hany Armanious, John Bock, Carla Cescon, Marcus Coates, Mikala Dwyer, Steinar Haga Kristensen, Jonathan Meese, Paul Thek, Justene Williams and myself have taken. And we take it so as to return to the viewer the very power that is invested in the artist, that of creating a vision: what Rex Butler refers to in relation to Hany Armanious as the “gift of sight.” (Butler 2000). These artists and myself offer the “gift of sight” by reflecting the act of perception and by engaging the viewer in the same process that the artist goes through. The way we do this is by setting up complex, multi-positional, process-based systems that are highly informed and engaging but do not lead to an end position. Because the artist does not presume to idealise this end position, the result is inevitably confusing, slippery, uncertain, and ambivalent, as if the artist has no position or avoids commitment.” Clare Milledge ¹³

Recent solo exhibitions include *Theoretical Regression: A Warm Sheen Against Received Ideas*, The Commercial Gallery, Sydney (2014); *Altus Duel: Total Environment*, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne (2014) and (2013); *Maximalist Ritualist* (with Carla Cescon) at the Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide (2012).
Clare Milledge is represented by The Commercial, Sydney.

Artworks

The Bisonity of Self

2016

Mini scaffolding, various textiles, Klean Klay, ink, horsehair, beeswax, cardboard, glass bottle

Dimensions variable

Atlas Constellation

2016

Oil on tempered glass, bronze

2 panels, each 130 × 130 × 0.4 cm

Novgorod's Bolus

2016

Oil on tempered glass, bronze

3 panels, each 90 × 90 × 0.4 cm

Clare Milledge installation incorporates painting, sculpture and assemblage. Milledge often invites other artists to perform within her installations. Her works suggest an ancient world, and a metaphysical, dreamlike or nightmarish reality. Milledge gives her artworks mysterious titles that overlay other layers of meaning.

Responding (address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group)

- Clare Milledge often invites other artists to perform within and in response to her installations. How do you imagine a performer might work within *The Bisonity of Self*?
- How does the artist use scale in this work, specifically in the relationship to the figure and the bed? What feeling does that express to the viewer?
- Who is the figure in bed in *The Bisonity of Self*?
- What other objects are incorporated into this sculptural installation? What might they represent or symbolise?

- Clare Milledge has a strong interest in sound. Can you find elements of the installation that relate to or suggest sound?
- What is the relationship between Milledge's paintings and her installation in this exhibition? How are they displayed in relation to each other?
- Describe the surface of Clare Milledge's paintings – how does the surface of the glass affect the way the paint appears?
- Describe how the artist has used rhythm, repetition and colour and shape in her paintings.

Making

- Shamans have been important community leaders in cultures all over the globe, at different periods in history. Explore shamanic practice in various cultures, and draw on their imagery to create new, hybrid forms and images in your artwork.

VCE Art/Studio Art

- Describe the aesthetic qualities evident in *The Bisonity of Self*.
- Compare and contrast Clare Milledge's work to that of Robert Rauschenberg, especially his sculpture *Monogram* from the late 1950s

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Arts training is an essential part of an innovative nation,
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James Norman, *I was surprised to learn my career is actually a "lifestyle choice"*, Sydney Morning Herald, 22 October 2016
→ <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/i-was-surprised-to-learn-my-career-is-actually-a-lifestyle-choice-20161020-gs7ega.html>

Introduction

About the Curator

Biographical information sourced from *Neverwhere* brochure
text sourced 31 October 2016 at the below online page
(See document titled *Curatorial Concepts and Artists*)
→ <http://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/arts/exhibitions-and-projects/current-exhibitions/neverwhere>

Themes

Asialink website:

→ <http://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/about-us/what-we-do>

NETS Victoria website and Erewhon catalogue

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Claire Lambe

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Clare Milledge

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→ <http://claremilledge.com/>

Image on page 14, Claire Lambe, *Miss Universal*, 2015, courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Presents, Melbourne.

EREWHON
Learning
Resource

All other images are installation views of *Erewhon* at Margaret Lawrence Gallery, VCA, the University of Melbourne, photography by Christian Capurro.

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