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## WOMINJEKA - A NEW BEGINNING

### Learning Guide



# WOMINJEKA - A NEW BEGINNING

## CONTENTS



3	ABOUT THIS LEARNING GUIDE
3	PLANNING YOUR VISIT
4	CURRICULUM LINKS AND THEMES
	INTRODUCTION
5	• THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST
6	• THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RETURN OF CULTURAL MATERIALS
6	• DRAWING ON THE PAST, CELEBRATING THE FUTURE
	EARLY CAREER ARTISTS, INSPIRATION WORKS, ACTIVITIES
8	• MARLENE GILSON (WADAWURRUNG)
11	• GEORGIA MACGUIRE (WURUNDJERI)
14	• MITCH MAHONEY (BOON WURRUNG)
17	• JOSH MUIR (YORTA YORTA/ GUNDITJMARA)
20	• RAYMOND YOUNG (GUNNAI/ GUNDITJMARA/YORTA YORTA)
14	REFERENCES

Cover Image: Mitch Mahoney  
Yan Yan Gorrinj Gorrinj Bunj Koolin – Growing up, 2015, Courtesy of the artist  
Installation view, Wominjeka: A New Beginning, Koorie Heritage Trust, 2015

Above: Maker unknown  
Parrying Shield, Victoria, mid-century  
Courtesy of the artist  
Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne



## 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 *Wominjeka: A New Beginning*. 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 information about the Koorie Heritage Trust, and 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 *Wominjeka*.

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 *Wominjeka* 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

## GENERAL CAPABILITIES

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

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

## CURRICULUM LINKS AND THEMES

*Wominjeka* 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.

*Wominjeka* provides an ideal starting point from which to explore cross-curricula projects, fostering collaboration between teachers and students, across the areas of intercultural understanding, ecology, ethics and history. In particular *Wominjeka* is relevant to the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

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.

Throughout the text, artists, groups and organisations are highlighted in blue to suggest starting points for further research.

## VCE ART/ STUDIO ART

- 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

## INTRODUCTION

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

*Wominjeka: a New Beginning* is an exhibition of new works inspired by artworks from the collection of [The Koorie Heritage Trust \(KHT\)](#), a collection that has been building over the past 30 years. It also celebrates the organisation's move from its original location on King Street in Melbourne, to The Yarra Building at Federation Square, a key cultural centre in Melbourne, alongside the National Gallery of Victoria's Ian Potter Centre, housing the NGV's Australian Collection, and The Australian Centre for the Moving Image.

The curatorial framework for the exhibition was to invite five early career Indigenous artists to partner with senior artist mentors, and create new works in response to artworks and objects from The Koorie Heritage Trust Collection. In this way *Wominjeka* celebrates the history of Koorie culture, the KHT, and the next generation of Koorie artists, supported and inspired by their history and culture, and celebrating their contribution to the ongoing vibrancy of their culture in contemporary Australia.

The Kulin Nation refers to an alliance of five tribes or language groups from South and Central Victoria in the area around Port Philip, Western Port, and to the North encompassing, Boort, Maryborough, Daylesford and Bendigo; and to the East, the Howqua and Goulburn river areas. The alliance included the language groups of the *Wirundjeri* people, the *Boon Wurrung*, the *Wadawurrung*, the *Taungurong* and the *Dja Dja Wurrung*.

## THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST

The Koorie Heritage Trust was set up in 1985 by Ron Merkel QC and the late Ron Castan AM QC. Its purpose was to promote greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of Koorie culture amongst the broad community; and to respond to the need for Koorie cultural heritage material to be controlled, managed and curated by Koorie people. The Trust houses several significant collections including a collection of artworks and objects, a photographic collection, a collection of oral history recordings and a reference library. The KHT also assists people to trace their Koorie family history, helping to connect members of The Stolen Generations and their descendants to family, culture and community.<sup>1</sup>

'Koorie' is a term used by contemporary indigenous people, to refer to the Indigenous people of Victoria and New South Wales.

1. <http://korieheritagetrust.com.au/about-us/history/>

## DRAWING ON THE PAST, CELEBRATING THE FUTURE

*Wominjeka – A New Beginning* presents a challenge to early career Indigenous artists to respond to the work of their cultural predecessors, and to do so with the support of mentors who are more established in their own careers. This represents an interweaving of history, with support from 'elders' (regardless of their biological age), and a visioning for the future.

Framing culture in terms of 'past', 'present' and 'future' is reflected in the common practice for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians to 'acknowledge country' at public events. An Acknowledgement of Country is a way that we can show awareness and respect for Aboriginal culture and heritage and the ongoing relationship the traditional owners have with their land. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the traditional custodians of the land (or sea) where the event, meeting, school function or conference takes place. It can be formal or informal.

Here is an example of an Acknowledgement of Country where the language group is not known:

"I would like to show my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, of elders past and present, on which this event takes place."<sup>3</sup>

The mentoring artists include:

Maree Clarke (*Mutti Mutti, Wemba Wemba /Yorta Yorta*)

Peter Waples-Crow

Ray Thomas (*Gunnai*)

Lee Darroch (*Yorta Yorta*)

See the NETS Victoria website for more biographical information about their art practices, here:

<http://netsvictoria.org.au/exhibition/wominjeka-a-new-beginning/>



## THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL MATERIALS

One of the most significant activities of the Koorie Heritage Trust has been to begin the process of collecting and gathering together Indigenous cultural materials that have been dispersed far and wide, due to the plundering and trade in Indigenous cultural materials during the colonial period. In 2011 Tasmanian Aboriginal Lawyer Michael Mansell commented on the issue in the Sydney Morning Herald:

*Let's not forget that many of these items were taken when Aborigines were at their most vulnerable, when fear of retribution prevented resistance. There are ethical and cultural issues that burden any private property claims. Moreover, a society that does not record its history in books becomes ever more reliant on artefacts, drawings and rock engravings for its cultural foundation. The claiming of Aboriginal artefacts as the private property of collectors, museums and the state deprives Aborigines of the artistic expressions so vital to their continuing story and identity. Unique fighting clubs, drawings of corroboree, woven cane and reed baskets can reconnect generations of Aborigines with their past.<sup>2</sup>*

2. Michael Mansell, *Should indigenous artefacts be sent home?* Sydney Morning Herald, 10 September 2011

3. <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/welcome-to-country-acknowledgement-of-country>

## RELEVANT ARTICLES AND TEXTS

### *Should Indigenous artefacts be sent home?*

Sydney Morning Herald article on the repatriation of Indigenous cultural materials from four different perspectives (including comments from Michael Mansell as quoted above: <http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/the-question/should-indigenous-artefacts-be-sent-home-20110909-1k1qb.html>)

*The Social, Cultural and Historical Context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians (part 1, chapter 3)*, Pat Dudgeon, Michael Wright, Yin Paradies, Darren Garvey and Iain Walker from *Working Together, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice* published by The Kulunga Research Network, 2010  
[http://aboriginal.telethonkids.org.au/media/54859/part\\_1\\_chapter3.pdf](http://aboriginal.telethonkids.org.au/media/54859/part_1_chapter3.pdf)

## STARTING POINTS FOR DISCUSSION AND RESEARCH

- Research the meaning of the title of the exhibition. What does the word 'wominjeka' mean? What language does it come from?
- What is the logo for the Koorie Heritage Trust? What does it symbolise?
- What is the motto for the KHT? What does it mean?
- What does Koorie mean? Where are the traditional lands of the Kulin Nation? Trace their boundaries on a map. Find the Indigenous language group for the area where you live. What are their totems? What is the purpose of a totem? Can you think of other kinds of totems used in non-Indigenous Australian culture? What is your totem?
- Who are 'The Stolen Generations'? What does this term mean? Discuss the issues that are relevant to The Stolen Generations, both historical and contemporary. Explore the history of ex-Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's historic apology to The Stolen Generations.
- Discuss what makes an object 'sacred'. Discuss points raised in the above articles
- What is the difference between an 'Acknowledgment of Country' and a 'Welcome to Country'? Why do we acknowledge Country? Why is it important?
- Why do Indigenous artists state their language group on their artworks?
- What do mentors do? Why are they useful/important?
- What is 'inspiration'? How can we draw on artworks and objects to influence and inspire our own work?

# THE ARTISTS

## 1. MARLENE GILSON (*Wadawurrung*)



Marlene Gilson, *Lionel Rose - Champion*, 2015  
Courtesy of the artist

### ARTIST'S BACKGROUND

Marlene Gilson was born in Warrnambool and is a proud Wadawurrung traditional owner and Elder. Her art practice began several years ago as a way of processing her experiences after an illness. Her artwork is a way of documenting past Wadawurrung history and culture, providing a visual link with her ancestral people. She draws inspiration from her lived history and the stories passed down by her grandmother, and also from Goldfields history, and early settlement of Ballarat, referencing historical records and research into Wadawurrung history. Gilson has developed her own style of figurative painting that stems from a love of art experienced in her early primary education.<sup>4</sup>

### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Lionel Edmund Rose – Nickname Slim was born 21.6.1948 in Warragul Victoria. Lionel followed his father into the ring. He was the first Indigenous World Champion, winning World Bantamweight Championship, and the first Australian of the Year. His lifetime career of 53 fights and 11 losses made him a legend in the world of boxing. In the late 60's and 70's his music career kicked off with his first song 'Thank You' reaching No.1 on Australian country charts followed by 'Pick Me Up On Your Way Down'. When I first saw his statue at the Koorie Heritage Trust it inspired me to paint an Australian Icon.

4. *Wadawurrung: Past, Present, Future*, Exhibition brochure, Bunjilaka Melbourne Museum, 2014





Marlene Gilson, *Marngrook - Football*, 2015, Courtesy of the artist

The miners on the goldfields watched Aboriginal boys in the bush playing a ball game – Marngrook. The game was adapted and Geelong invited the Ballarat miners to a game of what they called “football”. My work explores links to my ancestors by depicting historical events, Aboriginal Myths and Dreamtime stories of the Wadawurrung people. I am influenced by my country, which takes in Ballarat, Werribee, Geelong, Skipton and the Otway Ranges. My style reflects the *naïve imagery* of the Wadawurrung people and further aims to encourage the younger generation to keep the stories alive, through painting and learning about culture.

## ARTWORKS FROM THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST COLLECTION AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION



Left: Stephen Glassborow  
*Bronze Statue of Lionel Rose*, 2009  
Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne



Right: Wally Cooper  
*(Yorta Yorta/Moidaban), Marngrook (skin ball)*, c 2000  
Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne

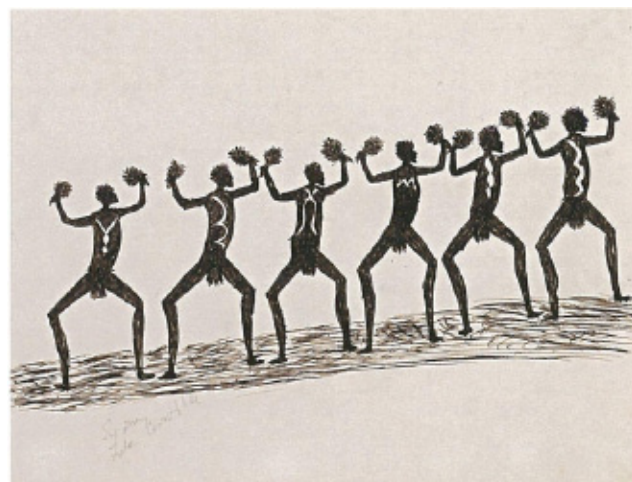
## RESPONDING

Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group

- Marlene Gilson has chosen diverse artworks to respond to in her work – two sculptural works and some ink drawings. What aspects from each artwork has she drawn on from the different artworks to create her paintings?
- Marngrook was a game for both men and women, testing skills of agility, cooperation and teamwork. Why would a possum skin be used to make a Marngrook ball? Can you name some famous Indigenous contemporary football players?
- Research the life of Lionel Rose. When and where did he live? What were his achievements?
- Marlene Gilson uses a 'naïve' style of figurative painting to represent two historically significant events. Discuss the meaning of the term naïve. Find other artists that use this style, Indigenous or non-Indigenous, historical or contemporary?
- Who was William Buckley? Research his life and times.
- Discuss how Gilson chooses to represent space in her paintings.
- Discuss how the viewer is placed in relation to the action. How does this affect the meaning of the works?
- How is shape used to create structure in the works?



Tommy McRae (Kwat Kwat), *Untitled (Men hunting birds)*, c1880s



Tommy McRae (Kwat Kwat), *Sydney Tribe Corroboree*, c1880s



Tommy McRae (Kwat Kwat), *Untitled (spearing fish)*, c1880s



Tommy McRae (Kwat Kwat), *Untitled*, c1880s  
Images courtesy of the Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne

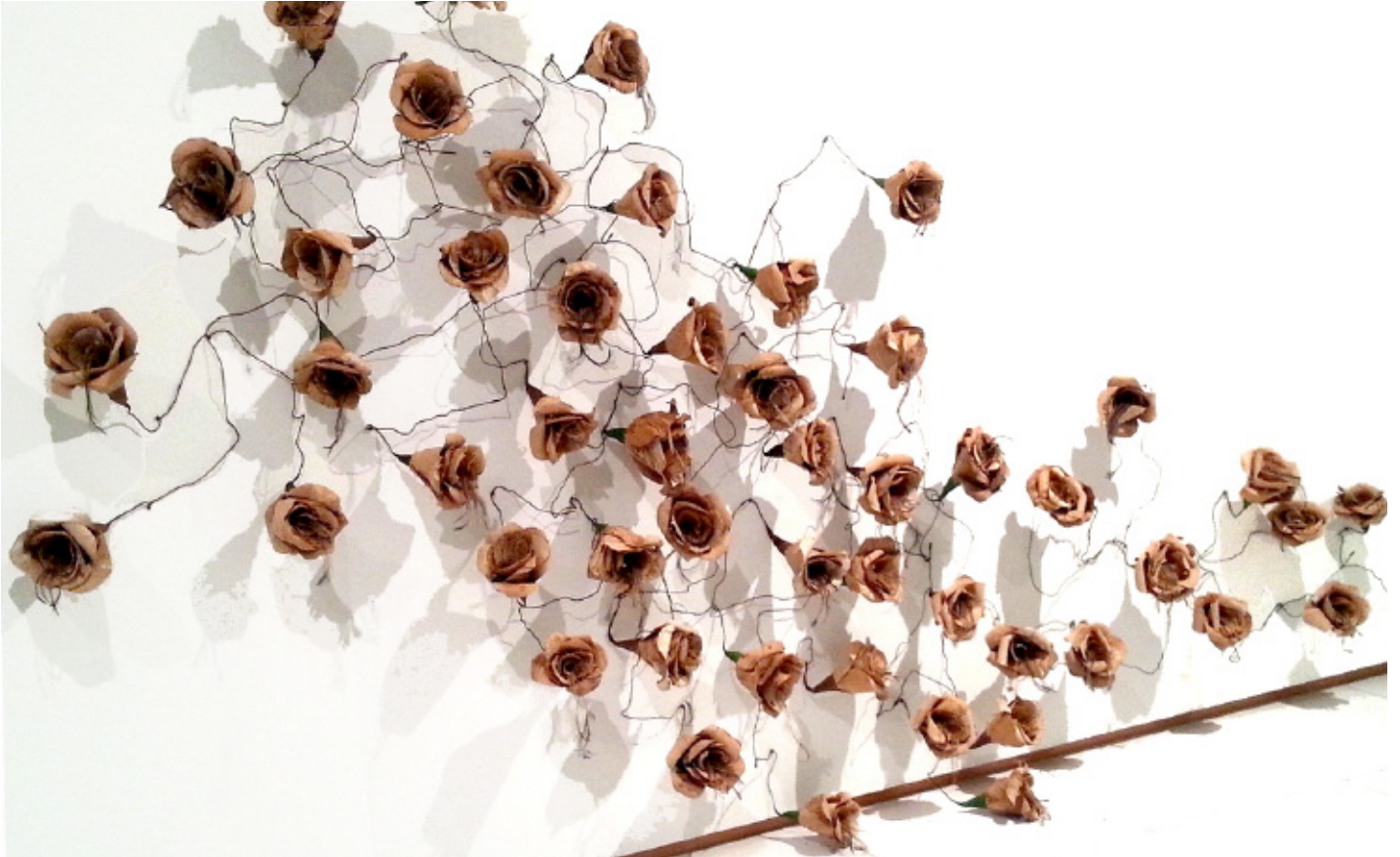
## MAKING

- Marlene Gilson has created paintings that celebrate her culture through significant historical sporting events. What event would you choose to represent, to celebrate your cultural heritage?
- Experiment with a naïve style of painting to represent your chosen event.
- Throughout the exhibition, artists draw inspiration from other artworks. Select your favourite artworks from this exhibition and draw inspiration from them to make your own artworks.

## VCE ART/ STUDIO ART

- Research the life of Tommy McRae. What happened to him? How does his story reflect the cultural attitudes in Australia in the 19th century? How have those attitudes changed over the years?

## 2. GEORGIA MACGUIRE (*Wurundjeri*)



Georgia MacGuire, *Emblem*, 2015, Courtesy of the artist

### ARTIST'S BACKGROUND

Georgia MacGuire grew up in Canberra in the 1980s, and developed a strong interest in art, politics and human rights. This interest led to a 15-year career in the community sector, where she travelled Australia to work with women, young people, children and families. In 2000, Georgia moved to Melbourne to rekindle a sense of belonging to the places her mother and grandmother had been raised and lived. In reconnecting with her family's origins, Georgia decided to redirect her humanitarian passion into a full-time art practice. MacGuire is currently based in the Central Goldfields area.

On her website she states that she is driven by the desire to reveal the truth of, and change the lived experiences of Aboriginal women through her practice and a sensory connection to her work. Her multi-disciplinary practice adopts a postcolonial feminist perspective, and which aims to communicate her experiences of the human condition. Georgia has been selected for various awards and scholarships, and is a recent recipient of the CAL Victorian Indigenous Art Award for three-dimensional works as

well as the Victorian Indigenous Art Awards and the People's Choice prize.<sup>5</sup>

For MacGuire the image of a rose unites and symbolises the Indigenous women in her family. The artist's grandmother, Isabel, sang "*The Yellow Rose of Texas*" while cooking: an old folk song musing on a young woman of mixed race (a 'mulatto') envisioned as 'yellow' amid the darker people of the American south. In the artist's library of books, a pile of rose anthologies inherited from her mother once instructed the growth of some 40 specimens in their garden. MacGuire recalls a childhood adorned in feminine paraphernalia: "*I vividly remember a dusky-pink velvet pinafore I owned as a little girl, which had a red rose embroidered on the front. My mother bought me one 'good' dress every year, and it was by far my favourite item of clothing. I think it was the one item of clothing I owned which made me feel like I wasn't the poor black kid in the street.... my matriarchal lineage towards a love of roses and dresses — even contemporary fashion — is a poignant signifier of our forced assimilation.*"<sup>6</sup>

5. <https://georgiamacguire.com/about>

6. Laura Skerlj, *Georgia McGuire: Healing Dresses*, Trouble Magazine, 2014

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

The flower has long been a symbol of the feminine. For me the image of a rose constellates around the Indigenous women in my family. It is a signifier of my childhood, as well as the love of my grandmother and mother. While the rose summons the familiarity of what has past, there is also a concurrent discomfort in recognising these flowers as implicitly 'colonial'.

The feather flowers held in the Koorie Heritage Trust Collection have inspired the making of 'Emblem'. Historically feather flowers were crafted by Aboriginal women and were sold mostly to Milliners in the south east of Australia. Of particular note is Queen Aggie Edwards – who became an entrepreneur in her own right around the turn of the 20th Century. Queen Aggie made enough money through her craftwork to financially support herself and live independently.

Reflecting on the narrative of the craft of feather flowers and the experience of the Aboriginal women who made them, I have considered the duality of the flower emblem. As an icon, flowers have their own symbolic language, which is commonly connected to western ideas of romance and stereotyped gender roles.

It's these romantic notions that contribute to the objectification and disempowerment of women in a culture where violence towards women is commonplace. With this in mind, the work acknowledges women who have died as a result of violence in Australia – especially the Aboriginal women – creating a flower for each woman murdered in 2015.

Flowers have the *synchronal* ability to elicit experiences of the *sublime* through their connection to nature, sex and procreation. They engage our senses and stimulate our thoughts through their *mnemonic* values.

By creating 'Emblem', I am asking viewers to connect *viscerally* through the work to the experiences of women in Australia both past and present – their trauma, their beauty and their heroism.

I would like to acknowledge the work of Destroy the Joint who continues to keep a record of each woman who has died and the circumstances of her death. During the making of this work it became disturbingly difficult to keep up with their tally.

## ARTWORKS FROM THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST COLLECTION AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION



Left: Letty Nicholls (*Narrindjeri*), *Feather Flowers*, 1988, Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne

Right: Glenda Nicholls (*Wadi Wadi/ Ngarrinderi/Yorta Yorta*), *Feather Flowers*, 1994, Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne



Glenda Nicholls (*Wadi Wadi/Ngarrindjeri/Yorta Yorta*), Letty Nicholls (*Narrindjeri*), Maker Unknown *Feather Flowers*, Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne

## RESPONDING

Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group

- Research the art terminology and adjectives highlighted in blue in Georgia MacGuire's artist statement. Discuss their meaning.
- Compare the work *Emblem* with the *Feather Flower* works that inspired it. What are the similarities and differences? Consider your comparison in terms of colour, texture and structure.
- Discuss the symbolism of the rose – what meanings does it convey? How is it used in the artwork *Emblem*?
- Discuss the installation of these artworks (*Emblem*, and the group of *Feather Flowers*), their position in the gallery space. How could you imagine them displayed differently? How would that affect the way they are viewed?
- What is the impact of the gallery lighting on these works?
- Discuss the artist's choice of materials – what is the impact of her choice on the meaning of the artwork?

## MAKING

- Gather organic materials to make a sculptural installation. Experiment with the idea of multiple versions of the same image or object.
- Think about what organic object would best represent your personal and family history?

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- How does Georgia MacGuire's use of repetition (or 'multiples') affect the meanings and messages of her work?
- How has the artist's cultural background influenced her choice of imagery?
- Research the use of feathers in traditional ceremonial ornamentation. Explore how you can use this idea to inspire your folio development.

### 3. MITCH MAHONEY (*Boon Wurrung*)



#### ARTIST'S BACKGROUND

Mitch Mahoney is a young artist based in New South Wales. In 2013 he took part in Museum Victoria's Indigenous Pathways program – a placement at the Museum for Indigenous students to experience life 'behind the scenes' at the Museum. Mahoney wrote of his experience: *"I was shown around various areas, but my favourites were the Indigenous collections. John Duggan showed me traditional tools, weapons, shields and stone tips. Kimberley Moulton gave me a tour of the First Peoples exhibition pointing out many things that I found interesting, and explaining the huge amount of work that has gone into this exhibition. It tells an amazing story of Aboriginal people. During my time at the museum I was also given the opportunity to show my possum skin cloak that I made for my year ten major work. I am passionate about my art, the art of my people – Boon Wurrung, Yorta Yorta and Barkindji people. As a young child I would always draw Aboriginal style animals and landscapes, but as I grew up I stopped. It was rare that I would draw in Aboriginal style until year ten when I had to decide what to make for my end of year major works. I decided to make a traditional possum skin cloak that would tell a story of my life and my family. The cloak is made of 35 possum skins stitched together with a waxy string and on the pelt side I burnt on patterns and drawings of animals."*<sup>7</sup>

Mitch Mahoney, *Realities, Lovers, Rebirth, Together*, 2015, Courtesy of the artist. Installation view, *Wominjeka: A New Beginning*, Koorie Heritage Trust, 2015

#### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

*My artwork is about my identity and who I am as a young person today. It speaks about my connection to my friends, family and loved ones and how this connection has built who I am. My relationships and experiences with people define who I am as a person. The writing speaks of young people growing up together and going through things together, true friendships. For me it has similarities to the struggles and triumphs of my people. The hummingbirds are lovers one male one female. The white snakes are their soul, their essences, who they are. Weaving in and out of the black snake who is made up of a collection of strong patterns representing their demons. These lovers become twisted up in the world, losing who they are, disconnecting with each other because of past experiences, their demons wrap around them keeping them apart creating their own imaginary wall.*

*The egg symbolises rebirth, renewal, new life and for me the knowledge that everything will be okay. We will grow, change and evolve into who we are meant to be.*

7. Mitch Mahoney, <https://museumvictoria.com.au/about/mv-blog/nov-2013/indigenous-pathways-placement/>

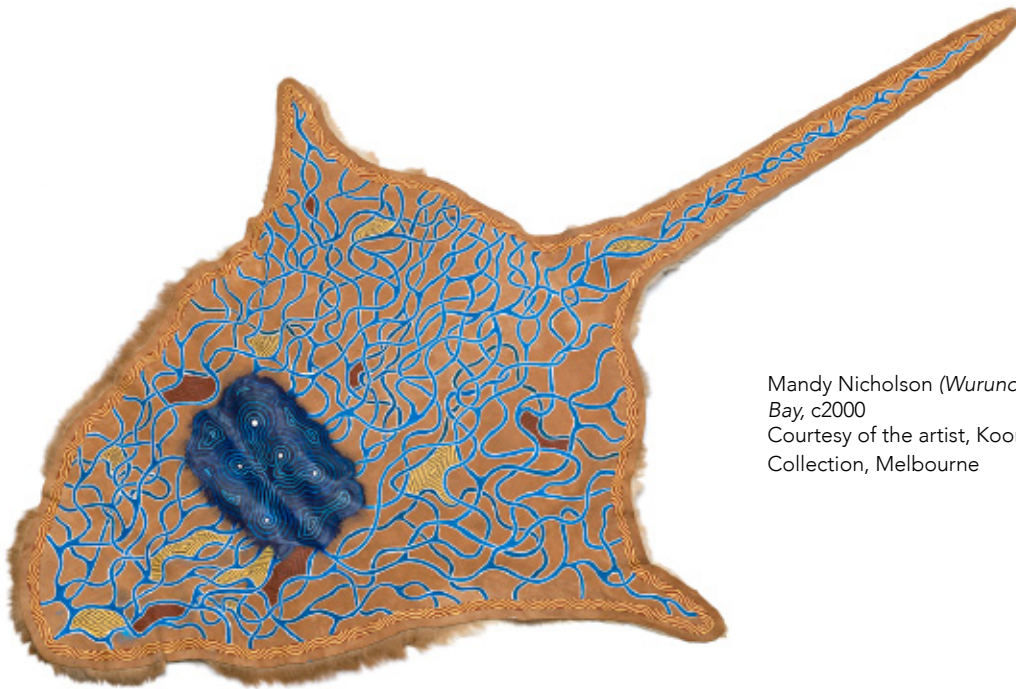


Mitch Mahoney, *Yan Yan Gorrinj Gorrinj Bunj Koolin – Growing up*, 2015, Courtesy of the artist. Installation view, *Wominjeka: A New Beginning*, Koorie Heritage Trust, 2015

## ARTWORKS FROM THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST COLLECTION AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION



Kelly Koumalatsos (*Wergaia/Wamba Wamba*), *Possum Skin Cloak*, late 1990s  
Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne



Mandy Nicholson (*Wurundjeri*), *Map of Port Phillip Bay*, c2000  
 Courtesy of the artist, Koorie Heritage Trust Collection, Melbourne

## RESPONDING

Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group

- The artworks that Mitch Mahoney has drawn on for inspiration are both made from animal skin. Discuss the different meanings and messages that are present in the idea of and the presence of a skin. What is the difference between leather and skin? How do their symbolic meanings differ?
- Mandy Nicholson's work represents Port Phillip Bay. What aspects of the Bay does it represent?
- What is the Aboriginal name for Port Phillip Bay? Research the creation story and discuss the relationship between stars and water.
- Research the Creative Victoria publication *Nyernila, Listen Continuously*, which documents the Indigenous creation stories of Victoria. You can find it online. What is the creation story for your area?
- Discuss the use of text in Mitch Mahoney's artwork – what is the relationship between text and image and object in his work *Yan Yan Gorriinj Gorriinj Bunj Koolin – Growing up* (2015)?

## MAKING

- How could you incorporate the idea of a garment in your own artwork? What kind of garment would you choose to symbolise your life's journey so far?
- Make some drawings in your sketchbook to imagine different artworks you could make using the idea of a garment.

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- Mitch Mahoney makes drawing on paper, and also on his kangaroo skin installation. Compare the different ways in which the artworks communicate their meanings and messages, according to their different materials.
- Describe the aesthetic qualities that are a result of the materials that Mahoney uses? How would these works operate differently if they were drawings or paintings?
- Research the use of possum skin cloaks in traditional Indigenous culture. How was imagery used on the inside of the cloak? How did cloaks feature in burial rituals?



#### 4. JOSH MUIR (*Yorta Yorta/Gunditjmara*)



Joshua Muir, *We Will Survive*, 2015, Courtesy of the artist

### ARTIST'S BACKGROUND

Josh Muir is a young artist from Ballarat. During his early life he battled with homelessness, anxiety and depression.<sup>8</sup> He says of his 2015 solo exhibition at MARS Gallery in Melbourne "At 24 my full story is yet to be told but this body of work is about my path to creativity, a way to tell my story through the symbols, which are important to me."<sup>9</sup>

Josh took to contemporary street art as a child, inspired by the colour contrasts and its visibility and accessibility in the public arena. His path has not been easy, due to teenage drug use, overdoses and

depression, but he found his way back through the support of his family, friends and by making art. Being Aboriginal has given him a strong connection to his culture, and creativity has always been a source of strength for him.

Josh Muir's *Buninyong* won in its category at the 2016 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards. His drawings were converted into animations and projected on the wall of the National Gallery of Victoria for *White Night* in 2016.

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

*My artwork is about my identity and who I am as a young person today. It speaks I am a proud Yorta Yorta/Gunditjmara man, I hold my culture strong to my heart and it gives me a voice and great sense of my identity. I look around I see empires built on Aboriginal land, I cannot physically change or shift this, though I can make the most of my culture in a contemporary setting and my art projects are about reconciliation.*

*'We Will Survive' symbolizes my Totem, the long neck turtle. The turtle totem wisdom teaches us about walking our path in peace and sticking to it with determination and serenity. Slow moving on earth, yet also incredibly fast and agile in water, those who have the turtle as totem may be encouraged to take a break in their busy lives and look around or within themselves for more grounded, long-lasting solutions. Traditionally, the turtle is symbolic of the way of peace, whether it's inviting us to cultivate peace of mind or a peaceful relationship with our environment, which is surrounded by the sun, the light and all its beautiful power. The work also highlights back to back images of myself carrying a boondi, a traditional hunting weapon, in a strike pose of an Aboriginal war dance. I am strongly protected by dingoes a companion, a spiritual protector, a physical protector and a source of warmth, which ties back into the support I have with family and community. The river represents my connection to water being from the Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara countries it is symmetrically shaped with*

*a scarred tree. With the city shaped treetop, which highlights rapid growth, it is suggesting a journey and construction of a canoe which has lead me to the city to adapt in the western world culture. Subliminally in the eye of the woman, the land is my mother, my mother is the land, the birth giver and provider is a shape of a boomerang with compliments to the Aboriginal flag on either side, the boomerang is shaped in a triangular shape with the three points meaning, physical world, human world and sacred world: The Dream Time, and finally the bottom left corner is a symbol of us gathering in hope of reconciliation.*

*It was an honour to research the KHT collection particularly the work of Aunty Lyn Briggs of the Wiradjuri, and Aunty Dorothy Lovett of Yorta Yorta. This has influenced my work in many ways: colour contrasts, story telling structuring of the artwork, and the cannel of thinking and rhythm. The use of totems and the layout of the story, and the pastel used in Aunty Dorothy Lovett artwork is amazing and I have used her painting 'Change of Seasons' as inspiration. Aunty Lyn Briggs level of detail and the boldness and reference to movement in 'Mopoke (Owl)' and 'Chasing the Frill Necked Lizards, have aided in my process in creating 'We Will Survive'.*

*The creative process has been very valuable and I enjoyed it.*

## ARTWORKS FROM THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST COLLECTION AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

Treahna Hamm, (Yorta Yorta),  
Turtle, c2002, Courtesy of the artist,  
Koorie Heritage Trust Collection,  
Melbourne



Brian Firebrace, (Yorta Yorta),  
Dingo, c2006, Courtesy of the artist,  
Koorie Heritage Trust Collection,  
Melbourne





Dorothy Lovett (Gunditjmara)  
*Change of Seasons*, 1997,  
 Courtesy of the artist

## RESPONDING

Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group

- What aspects or elements has Josh Muir drawn on from Dorothy Lovett's work in his artwork *We Will Survive* (2015)?
- Research the different annual seasons of the Kulin Nation. How many are there and what are their names?
- Why do you think Muir has used aluminium to print onto? How would the meaning and effect of the work differ if it was printed on paper?
- What other some other things that might have influenced Josh Muir's imagery?
- How does the use of black effect the overall aesthetic qualities of the Muir's imagery? What does it remind you of?
- Treahna Hamm has woven a turtle out of natural fibres. How does her choice of materials and process affect the meaning of her artwork *Turtle* (c 2002)?
- In his artist's statement, Josh Muir responds to the turtle as a totem. He describes it's meaning. Why do you think the turtle has those meanings attached to it? What physical or behavioural

aspects influence its symbolism?

- Discuss Josh Muir's work in terms of art elements: How has he utilised colour? Line and shape? Symmetry? Repetition?

## MAKING

- Make a 3 dimensional work that represents an animal. If you have Koorie heritage, see if you can find your Indigenous totem animal, or perhaps you already know what it is. Or pick an animal that has special meaning for you. Think carefully about what would be the most appropriate.

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- Research Indigenous imagery in street art in Melbourne, and perhaps in your area too. What effect does it have on the culture of the city or the streetscape? Explain your ideas in terms of meanings and messages. What are the different cultural frameworks through which it can be viewed?

## 5. RAYMOND YOUNG (*Gunnai/Gunditjmara/Yorta Yorta*)

*Standing Strong Standing Proud*,  
2015

*Small Shield*, Raku, 63cm x 8cm  
x 3cm

*Medium Shield*, Red Raku, 66cm  
x 9cm x 3cm

*Large Shield*, Black smooth clay,  
70cm x 12cm x 3cm

### ARTIST'S BACKGROUND

Raymond Young was born in 1965. He developed his art skills while participating in an arts program for Indigenous prisoners in Loddon Prison called *The Torch*, a program designed and facilitated by Indigenous artist Kent Morris. *The Torch* program provides cultural and arts vocational support to Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders throughout Victoria. It seeks to address the social problem of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prisons, by supporting cultural strengthening, building confidence and strengthening identity. Raymond Young's work *From The Ground Up*, a series of ceramic shields, carved with traditional designs from the East Gippsland area, attracted a top prize at the 2015 Victorian Indigenous Art Awards. He uses Raku clay in his ceramic sculpture, which is used for hand-building techniques. His art practice has allowed him to reconnect with his people and feel a renewed sense of hope and life.<sup>10</sup>

### ARTIST'S STATEMENT

*These three Marragas (shields) represent my grandmother, father and me three generations of Gunnai people from Bairnsdale. The large shield represents my grandmother which has many markings and tells of her many descendants. The medium shield which is my father and it has the number of markings of his children. The third shield represents my journey through life and struggles that I've faced and how I've overcome and the markings also represent my kids.*



10. Raymond Young: From Prisoner to Award-Winner  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/booksandarts/viaa-2015/6684926>

# ARTWORKS FROM THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST COLLECTION AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

## RESPONDING

Address these questions as extended written answers, dot point answers, group discussion or discussion in pairs with reporting back to the group

- Research the life of famous Wurundjeri leader William Barak, who made one of the traditional shields that has inspired Raymond Young's work.
- Raymond Young's shields represent his grandmother, his father and himself. Discuss the differences between the shields, and how they link to the different people they represent.
- How has the use of clay affected the structure and shape of these artworks?
- Given his life experiences, why do you think Raymond Young chose the traditional shields as his inspiration? What does a shield symbolise to you?

## MAKING

- Explore ceramic construction techniques and the idea of working in 'series' to create similar yet unique sculptural works. Play with different approaches to how they can be displayed.

## VCE ART/STUDIO ART

- William Barak's image has been incorporated into a high rise building in Carlton recently. Research the various commentaries about this event. What are the issues raised?
- Describe the aesthetic qualities evident in Raymond Young's work. How do they relate to the traditional shields he has used as inspiration?



Left: Darren Pattie-Bux (Yorta Yorta)  
*Parrying Shield*, 1999  
Courtesy of the artist  
Koorie Heritage Trust Collection,  
Melbourne

Right: Maker unknown  
*Parrying Shield*, Victoria, mid-century  
Courtesy of the artist  
Koorie Heritage Trust Collection,  
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### EXHIBITION PARTNERS

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