

CONFLATED

Education Resource



NETS
VICTORIA.

Acknowledgement of Country

The *Conflated* exhibition tours on the lands of many Indigenous nations. NETS Victoria, the artists and the curators respectfully acknowledge and celebrate the continuing culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across Australia.

Front Cover:

Amrita Hepi with Honey Long and Prue Stent

Omphalus 2021

Video, 3 minutes 30 seconds

Commissioned by NETS Victoria

Courtesy the artists, Anna Schwartz Gallery and ARC ONE Gallery

About this education resource

This educational material has been developed to support educators and students prepare for and participate in visits to the NETS touring exhibition *Conflated*. It is designed to be used in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue and wall texts to enhance a guided or self-guided visit. There are also a variety of learning activities for students to explore back in the classroom in response to the exhibition.

This education resource includes

- Suggestions for planning a group visit to the exhibition
- Relevant Australian Curriculum links in relation to the exhibition
- An introduction to the key themes of the exhibition
- An interview with the exhibition co-curators Zoë Bastin and Claire Watson
- Introductory information about the exhibiting artists with links to more information about their artworks and practice
- Starting points for discussion and hands-on learning activities in relation to the artworks on display
- Glossary

Exhibition Content Notice

Please be aware that this exhibition contains nudity and sensitive themes. Viewer discretion is advised. Contact the gallery for further information.

Planning a visit

Make contact with the venue to find out about:

- Gallery opening times
- Transport and parking options
- Cloakroom facilities
- Any admission fees
- Scheduling a group visit and/or guided tour
- Upcoming dates for events associated with the exhibition
- Current Covid-safe information for visitors

Before your visit

- Introduce the educational intentions of visiting the exhibition
- Outline appropriate gallery etiquette and any current Covid-safe protocols

Australian Curriculum links

This education resource is broadly aimed at school students from levels 4 through 10. Tertiary educators and teachers of early-years students are invited to adapt this material to suit the specific learning needs of their students. The starting points for discussion and the activities within this resource provide opportunities for students to learn as both audience and artist. There are suggestions for talking about artworks in the galleries as well as making artworks in response to the exhibition back in the classroom.

Learning Areas

Visual Arts

Conflated relates to Visual Arts curricula at all levels of the Australian Curriculum.

Explore and Express: Students view *Conflated* and make artworks in response to their experiences in the galleries. They observe a variety of multidisciplinary artworks, considering the themes – as well as techniques, processes, materials and technologies – explored by the exhibiting artists which they, the students, then draw upon to express ideas in their own artworks.

Visual Arts Practices: While visiting the thematic group exhibition *Conflated*, students will encounter a diverse range of exhibiting artists and their practices. They will develop an understanding of how contemporary artists conceptualise their work and use materials to create artworks.

Present and Perform: As they view *Conflated*, students will encounter various methods of installation and presentation in the galleries. They will consider the artistic intentions of artists and curators, and how these relate to their own audience experience.

Respond and Interpret: Students will speculate about the meaning of the artworks displayed in *Conflated*. Following the visit, they research how particular contemporary cultural contexts, such as environmental sustainability and the Covid-19 pandemic have inspired the artists in relation to the exhibition theme of the conceptual and material possibilities of inflatable art.

General Capabilities

Engagement with the artworks on display in *Conflated* provides opportunities for students to develop the following general capabilities:

- Critical and creative thinking
- Ethical understanding
- Intercultural understanding
- Personal and social development

Cross Curriculum Priorities

Artworks by Amrita Hepi with Honey Long and Prue Stent, and Steven Rhall are relevant to the cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures.

Artworks by Christopher Langton, Eugenia Lim and James Nguyen address the cross-curriculum priority of sustainability.

Introduction to the exhibition themes

Conflated is a thematic group exhibition featuring the work of nine Australian artists/collectives who have been inspired by the physical and metaphorical possibilities of inflatables in contemporary art.

Inflation and deflation are processes that have a direct relationship to our bodies, and especially to the movement of the breath. As we inhale and exhale our bodies expand and contract; in turn, the air in the environment around us is displaced and replaced. This cycle of breathing and transformation is an accessible starting point for student audiences who experience the exhibition to consider the physical qualities of materials that can be blown up and deflated, and the ways these processes can represent our human experiences and relationships today.

Conflated has been co-curated by Zoë Bastin and Claire Watson. The exhibition emerged from their mutual interest in trying to find new ways to care for the environment and reduce the carbon-footprint of touring exhibitions via the curatorial process. In late 2019, the curators were thinking about ways in which sustainable practices could be embedded into the storage and freight of artworks. Together, Zoë and Claire realised the potential of inflatable art, which could be blown up and packed down at each venue. In this way, the exhibition would be physically smaller and more lightweight to transport in comparison to other art forms, and thus have a reduced carbon footprint.

For NETS Victoria, the idea of developing a more environmentally sustainable project was both timely and important in the face of climate change.

In the years since *Conflated* was initiated, the entire world has undergone a massive shift due to the global Covid-19 pandemic. Lockdowns and social distancing have fundamentally altered the way people relate to one another in public space and the direct relationship between breathing and the transmission of the virus has brought about a heightened awareness of the vulnerability of our bodies. A creative process that began for many of the exhibiting artists with a reflection on the fun, optimistic and celebratory qualities of inflatables became a compelling artistic response to the everyday realities of a changed social, cultural and emotional landscape.

Exhibiting Artists

- Zoë Bastin
- Andy Butler
- David Cross
- Bronwyn Hack
- Amrita Hepi with Honey Long and Prue Stent
- Christopher Langton
- Eugenia Lim
- James Nguyen
- Steven Rhall

Exhibiting artists and artworks

Zoë Bastin



Enough 2021

Video, 3 minutes 30 seconds

Commissioned by NETS Victoria

Courtesy the artist

Zoë Bastin is an artist, choreographer, curator and writer who is interested in exploring human emotions, bodies and experiences of gender through her practice. For the *Conflated* exhibition she has dual roles as artist and co-curator.

Bastin's new work for *Conflated* is a poetic single-channel video work titled *Enough*. In the video the artist performs a sequence of choreographed movements outdoors while holding a cape-like form created from a patchwork of iridescent foil balloons, the kind typically found in a hospital gift shop. While sporting brightly smiling faces and supportive messages such as 'get well soon', for the artist these deflated foil balloons symbolise the kind

of platitudes and empty gestures experienced by people who are struggling emotionally. As she produced the work during the pandemic, the artist spent time researching and reflecting on the emotional impact of mass-lockdowns and isolation on her own body and the way that dance could transform negative emotions into more positive ones. By interacting with the balloons through gestures of pushing, pulling, holding and joyfully animating them in the air, Bastin seeks to communicate and externalise what is often invisible – our internal emotional experiences.

www.zoebastin.com

Andy Butler



Live to your Potential (After Jeff Koons's Balloon Dog) 2018

HD video with audio, 5 minutes
Courtesy the artist

Andy Butler is a Filipino-Australian Melbourne-based artist, curator and writer who makes performances, paintings, installations and video works. His practice is concerned with exploring the structural power dynamics of the art world.

In *Conflated*, Butler's satirical video work *Live to your Potential (After Jeff Koons's Balloon Dog)* is on display. In his recorded performance, Butler stands in front of the camera wearing a suit and creating balloon dogs, the kind most often associated with magicians at children's birthday parties, through a repetitive process of blowing and twisting. Each hand-made dog

refers to the iconic series *Balloon Dogs* created by contemporary American artist Jeff Koons with the assistance of a team of fabricators. Butler's work intentionally critiques the highly inflated value of the art market, in which one of Koons' *Balloon Dogs* sold recently for over US\$58 million. In 2020 the National Gallery of Victoria purchased Koons' new artwork *Venus* (2016–20) for the permanent collection. Butler's work highlights the enormous gap between the high art market and the struggle to make a living that most artists face today.

www.andybutler.org

David Cross



Pair 2021

Installation, PVC vinyl
Commissioned by NETS Victoria
Courtesy the artist

David Cross has been working with inflatable sculptures for most of his career. He is best known for his acclaimed large-scale installations that explore social negotiations, interactions and participation.

For *Conflated* Cross was engaged both as an exhibiting artist and artistic consultant due to his extensive expertise working with the inflatable medium. He produced a participatory work entitled *Pair* for the project as a response to the enforced isolation and social distancing mandates put in place to prevent the spread

of infection during the Covid-19 pandemic. His large-scale vinyl installation is activated through the participation of two audience members, who are invited to lie down and reach for one another through a hole in the walls of a soft inflatable lounge chair. *Pair* is a poignant reminder of the importance of touch, and of human contact and connection.

www.davidcrossartist.com

Bronwyn Hack



Alfred 2021

Mixed media and inflatable soft sculpture
Commissioned by NETS Victoria
Courtesy the artist and Arts Project Australia

Bronwyn Hack's art practice spans sculpture, painting, printmaking and ceramics. She has worked at the studio of Arts Project Australia for more than a decade and has a longstanding interest in representing the body through her artwork.

For *Conflated*, Hack has produced a new body of work titled *Alfred*, inspired by the hot water bottle character in her favourite Australian children's television program *Johnson and Friends*. The surface of Hack's large-scale soft inflatable is constructed from a vivid array of colourful fabric scraps and tactile textures, visually referencing the familiar contours and

ridges on the rubbery surface of the domestic hot water bottle. The largest hot water bottle in Hack's installation is the same size as the artist herself and slowly inflates and deflates in the gallery space, echoing the human respiratory process.

www.artsproject.org.au/artist/bronwyn-hack

Amrita Hepi with Honey Long and Prue Stent



Omphalus 2021

Video, 3 minutes 30 seconds

Commissioned by NETS Victoria

Courtesy the artists, Anna Schwartz Gallery and ARC ONE Gallery

Amrita Hepi is a First Nations artist from Bundjulong and Ngapuhi territories (Townsville) who works with dance, choreography, photography, video and installation practices. For *Conflated*, Hepi invited artistic duo Prue Stent and Honey Long to collaborate with her to produce a new video work titled *Omphalus*. This term refers to the navel, the scar each of us carry at the point where our umbilical cord was attached. Hepi was inspired by her ongoing interest in the work of cultural theorist Barbara Creed around the 'monstrous feminine' and the kind of archetypal monsters that women have

been portrayed as throughout human history – from Greek mythology to contemporary horror movies. The video work includes the use of a single inflatable limb and visual symmetry to experiment with distorted views of the female body, creating an abstracted, ambiguous kaleidoscope of mutating figures and forms.

www.amritahepi.com

www.honeyandprue.com

Christopher Langton



Breathe In Breathe Out 2021

PVC, silicone, polyurethane, hybrid polymer, thermoplastic polyester, pigment, fibreglass, acrylic, plywood, jacket, backpack, fake fur, air valves and air

Commissioned by NETS Victoria

Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries

Melbourne-based pop sculptor Christopher Langton is known for his mastery of plastic materials and large-scale blow-up installations. For *Conflated*, he has produced a compelling new work entitled *Breathe In Breathe Out*, which imagines a frightening new future in a post-Covid world. Created as Melbourne slowly emerged from lockdown, this life-sized work depicts a lone, masked figure standing alongside a ravaged marsupial in an apocalyptic landscape. As well as commenting on the isolation of the pandemic, the work asks

audiences to consider the consequences of environmental degradation through natural disasters like droughts and fires. The figure of *Breathe in Breathe Out* wears a menacing mask akin to those worn by World War I soldiers to protect them from the effects of toxic gases on the battlefield, raising timely questions about our fundamental need for healthy air to survive.

www.tolarnogalleries.com/artist/christopher-langton

Eugenia Lim

Shelters for Kyneton (tradic transfer) 2022

HD video with sound, 7 minutes 40 seconds, hand-sewn Mylar
Artist, Performer: Eugenia Lim; Cinematographer: Tim Hillier; Movement consultant, Editor, Sound: Zoe Scoglio; Costume designer: Ellie Boekman; Performers: Jennifer Anderson, Steve Boulter; Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial Producer: Angela Connor; Production assistant: Kent Wilson; Wearable shelters designed by Eugenia Lim in collaboration with, and sewn by, Ellie Boekman; Metal fabrication: Dale Holden
Commissioned by Kyneton Contemporary and NETS Victoria
Courtesy the artist and STATION



Shelters for Kyneton (tradic transfer) 2022

Eugenia Lim is a Melbourne-based artist of Chinese-Singaporean descent who works across video, choreography, social and spatial practice to explore ideas related to belonging, alienation, identity, community and interdependence in a globalised world.

For *Conflated*, Lim is exhibiting her recent video work *Shelters for Kyneton*. Originally produced for the 2022 Kyneton Contemporary Art Triennial, the work continues Lim's ongoing exploration of the relationship between architecture and community. It features the artist performing alongside two Kyneton locals – Mayor Jennifer Anderson and Transfer Station worker Steve Boulter. The work is about the flows of resources, life and ecology in Kyneton,

as well as being made to celebrate people coming together again after Covid-19 lockdowns. To symbolise this the artist made three gold Mylar jumpsuits for the performers to wear, all joined by one arm. In order to achieve anything, the individuals have to move collectively, as a single body. As the three performers move in unison, their costumes inflate, shimmer and expand. Lim has a longstanding interest in the material Mylar, which is most often used to create emergency blankets for first aid purposes. Here, the reflective Mylar has been used by the artist to represent resilience and recovery in the face of recent challenges during the pandemic.

www.eugenialim.com

James Nguyen



Sound file, 22 minutes
Commissioned by NETS Victoria
Courtesy the artist

Vietnamese-born Melbourne-based artist James Nguyen's wide-ranging practice encompasses performance, video, sound, drawing and installation. He is best known for making work that responds to global politics and personal histories related to displacement and diaspora.

For *Conflated*, Nguyen produced an experimental sound-based artwork titled *Inhaleinhaleinhale*, investigating how breathing has occupied the forefront of our collective consciousness during recent global events. References to the oppressive conditions of the Australian bushfires, the respiratory nature of the Covid-19 virus and

the final words of American George Floyd who died in police custody while uttering the words 'I can't breathe' are brought together in cacophony of found sounds drawn from the internet. Nguyen juxtaposes these moments of discord with calmer sound clips from ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response) videos developed to trigger the human relaxation response. Bringing together such a disparate range of political, psychological, social and environmental sounds reminds us of the vast array of influences upon our lives and our own vulnerability amidst it all.

www.jamesnguyens.com

Steven Rhall



Hermetic Rituals 2020

Digital prints on Dibond, found image, found floatation devices, remediated performance, timber
Commissioned by NETS Victoria
Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery

Steven Rhall is a Taungurung post-conceptual artist whose interdisciplinary practice interrogates the intersections between First Nations art and the Western Art canon.

For *Conflated*, Rhall presents a triptych of framed photographic prints documenting a performance in which the artist is depicted with his torso covered in mud while wearing the head of a yellow inflatable kangaroo over his own as a mask. The photographs depict the costume twisted and contorted into varying

states of discombobulation and discomfort for the model. Within the lower half of each frame are pieces of the rest of the inflatable kangaroo and its packaging. This confronting artwork asks audiences to critique the way popular signifiers of Australian leisure, culture and sport – such as the iconic boxing kangaroo – are commodified to celebrate identity upon colonised land and waters.

www.stevenrhall.com

Interview with the curators

This conversation between *Conflated* co-curators Zoë Bastin (ZB), Claire Watson (CW) and educator Melissa Bedford (MB) took place in April 2022.

MB: What are the main themes and intentions for the exhibition *Conflated*?

ZB: As a curatorial premise, *Conflated* explores the materiality of inflatables through the artistic practices of contemporary artists. Although inflatables' ability to be blown up and to deflate – as well as their likeness to breathing – evokes the body and the implicit atmospheric factors of living on earth, each artist approached this concept through their own lens. Amrita Hepi, for example, was very interested in monstrosity and femininity at the time of making. *Omphalus*, created in collaboration with Prue Stent and Honey Long, became an exploration of the inflatable as an extension of the body, disguising, disrupting and abstracting our preconceived notions of what feminine bodies can be. Because the artists brought their own research and interests to each project, the themes they explore span widely – from Australian cultural identity and Indigenous rights in Steven Rhall's work to intimacy in a global pandemic in David Cross' project.

MB: How did you come up with the concept for the exhibition?

ZB: Claire and I were brainstorming on a lunch break one day about how to reduce the carbon footprint of NETS Victoria and joked about making a show with inflatables that could be deflated while touring. Because NETS Victoria exhibition tours travel the country by truck, finding a way for artworks to take up less physical space was a compelling idea. Then, the concept just stuck. We were mesmerised by the idea of inflatability and challenging artists to conflate their own interests and practices with an emerging medium that, through new technology, is growing every day.

MB: Were you influenced by or responding to any specific aspects of contemporary life?

ZB: As curators, we think it is important that this show reflects the practices of living Australian artists, starting a conversation about what it is to live and make work in contemporary Australian society. All the artists went in very different directions of course, but I thought about the joyful possibilities of making something blown up and what about contemporary life I was responding to. The context of Covid-19 became a focus for some of the artists in the show as works were commissioned in 2020, and it certainly became the focus of my (Zoë Bastin's) project *Enough*, which looks to the inflatable to express psychological distress in a physical form.

MB: How did you work together to select the exhibiting artists?

CW: We both came to the table with artists that we had been keeping an eye on. There were artists that we felt would be excited by the brief and the opportunity to stretch their practice into new terrains. There was a much longer list at first and we really had to engage in rigorous conversation about the intersections of their practices. It was important for us to include artists of diverse ages, backgrounds and cultures. There were also some artists that had an ongoing interest in inflatables, which we both agreed was important to recognise.

ZB: For me, it's really important to engage artists I have a relationship with, to know what point in their career they are at and what capacity they may have to embark on a project like this. Touring an exhibition around the country is a lengthy process so working with artists who were established enough to devote the time and energy was also an important consideration.

MB: What are the qualities that link all the artworks in the exhibition together?

CW: The overarching themes of inflation, deflation and the qualities and movement of air are present in all of the works. Each artist has responded differently to the brief and there are a multitude of diverse interests represented, including aesthetic, political, personal and social motivations.

MB: When you invited each artist to exhibit, did you have existing artworks in mind or was there an opportunity to commission new works especially for *Conflated*? Have any of the artists worked with inflatables for the first time during this project?

ZB: We commissioned new works by most of the artists in *Conflated*, and some of them already had an interest in making inflatable sculptures. Professor David Cross has been making works that blow up for about twenty years and Christopher Langton certainly brought a lot of expertise. But some artists had never made inflatables before and our interest in their practices was more conceptual. We met as a

group and David assisted a few of the artists through the manufacturing process. I'd also like to mention here the amazing work by Sim Luttin and her team at Arts Project Australia, who worked with Bronwyn Hack to create her sculpture, *Alfred*. Inflatables were a new medium for Bronwyn and their support enabled her to create a truly spectacular work.

MB: What kind of meetings did you have with artists along the way? How did you support them to realise their projects?

CW: We invited some of the artists to make new commissions specifically for the project and with these artists we had a video call to discuss the themes of the project and hear their ideas. We engaged Professor David Cross as a consultant to support the artists, and us as co-curators, to learn more about the opportunities and limitations presented by the inflatable medium. He has a wealth of experience in producing inflatables and was able to address questions and concerns. Lockdowns in Melbourne did get in the way of some on-site studio visits, unfortunately, but we managed to have studio visits with some artists as their ideas were brought to fruition. It was exciting to see how their works had progressed.

MB: What kind of materials have the artists chosen to use to express their ideas? How do these materials relate to the exhibition theme?

ZB: Artists have worked with an enticing array of materials to express the inflatability of their works – some through sculpture and the performative potential of attaching works to the body and others with video. Eugenia Lim, for instance, engaged social choreography to make her video work of the Mayor of Macedon Ranges Shire Council and a Kyneton Transfer Station worker. James Nguyen, on the other hand, created a recorded sound work that explores the movement of air in the body as a way of looking at the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States and how it relates to his experience as a Vietnamese Australian.

MB: Are any works designed to respond to environmental concerns or climate change?

ZB: Christopher Langton's bespoke sculptural piece *Breathe In Breathe Out* is a response to the shifting conditions of Covid-19 lockdowns globally, and how they have provoked us to imagine alternate futures on planet earth. Langton challenges us to think about existence and accept that human development is creating more and more risks to our survival. The piece responds to the uncertainty of future life on earth, and explores how environmental degradation has caused lasting damage to social, political and economic landscapes.

MB: What is it about inflatables and soft sculptures that makes them so enticing?

CW: We were initially drawn to what we saw as inflatables' inherent qualities of optimism. They have a life-affirming quality; we were thinking about their connection to the body, the lungs, the joy of balloons. It was exciting to us that many artists challenged our preconceptions with their concepts around deflation, pollution, the abject, distortion, deformity, viral infection, rubbish, late-capitalism and colonisation. Through their works we came to realise the incredible versatility of the medium and its ability to touch on multiple issues reflecting everyday life and everyday anxieties.

MB: Have you intentionally brought a sense of playfulness via the inflatables to gently encourage audiences to engage with more challenging contemporary ideas?

CW: Playfulness is not present in all the works. Even when an artwork may have a playful appearance, it is often functioning as a guise or methodology for exploring deep-seated issues and concerns. Inflation is something everyone can connect to – because of this, it has been a compelling conduit to explore darker areas of human society in a way that is perhaps more approachable or inviting. The accessible nature of inflatables and notions of inflation is something the artists have capitalised on to their advantage.

MB: Have there been any challenges in presenting inflatable artworks in the galleries that you've needed to be attuned to as you developed the exhibition?

ZB: Absolutely. Both the participatory nature of inflatable sculptures and the context of the pandemic have impacted our ability to share works with audiences. Sound has also presented unique challenges in curating this exhibition. Inflatables rely on an accumulation of air to be held within an object. For some works this is a matter of pumping them up during installation and leaving them fully inflated for the duration of the show. However, some works require constant flowing air to maintain their shape. This has meant using air blowers, which are remarkably loud as they gather and push air at velocity to create pressure that holds forms afloat. Finding solutions to balance this sound with other works that involve sound has certainly been challenging but I think we've come to a suitable resolution.

MB: What kind of atmosphere will audiences encounter in the galleries when they visit *Conflated*, and how has this been achieved through the exhibition design?

CW: Audiences will quickly sense a dynamic interplay of materiality and air. They will be challenged by some of the works and heartened by others. At first glance, there will be an alluring kinetic and dynamic atmosphere, but this will be subverted through closer interrogation of the works. The ambient sound of Andy Butler's work will permeate the space, which is quite simply the sound of balloons being manipulated, twisted and knotted into the shape of poodles or dachshunds. The sound of blowers pumping air into Zoë Bastin's and Bronwyn Hack's sculptural works will also be present, as will the gentle movement of Eugenia Lim's gold Mylar costumes. Visitors will be able to immerse themselves in the sound dome of James Nguyen's meditative work, contemplate Christopher Langton's confronting tableaux, Steven Rhall's discombobulating collage and Amrita Hepi with Honey Long and Prue Stent's striking video work, before stretching out into David Cross' inflatable installation and connecting with others through its membrane, designed for Covid-safe touching.

Learning activities in response to the exhibition

Guided breathing exercise: let your breath move you

In the galleries

Upon arrival in the exhibition space visiting students might like to take a moment to connect with their breath and become aware of how it moves into and out of the body before they look at the artworks on display. If students are comfortable, they might like to close their eyes for a short, guided meditation:

Stand for a moment and observe the nature of your breathing. Notice the continual relationship between your inhalation and exhalation. The breath expands and contracts in a rhythmic pattern that is in a constant state of oscillation, just like the ebb and flow of the tides. Notice which parts of your body move as you breathe in and out. Take five slow, silent breaths, then open your eyes.

Inquiry:

What did you notice happening during this short, guided meditation? Share your observations with a friend.

As you move through the *Conflated* exhibition in the galleries there are various physical, symbolic and conceptual references to breathing in the artworks on display. The cycle of breathing relates to the physical qualities of inflatable materials, which can be blown up and deflated, and the ways these kinds of movements can become a metaphor for our contemporary experiences.

Can you find references to breathing in each of the artworks as you move through the galleries? Describe them along the way.

Respond and interpret

In the galleries

Select an artwork from *Conflated* to discuss as a class, guided by the following prompts:

- What does the artwork make you think or wonder about? Develop a list of questions.
- How has the selected artist/s approached the exhibition concept of conflation in relation to themes and influences such as contemporary inflatable art, sustainability, the Covid-19 pandemic, the body, breathing and relationships? What kind of motifs and symbols are present within the artwork to express these ideas?
- How does the artwork make you feel as a viewer? What kind of moods and emotions are expressed within the work?
- Spend some time looking carefully at the artwork and brainstorm a list of adjectives to describe it based on what you can see.
- What materials and processes have been used by the artist/s to make the artwork? How have they been applied to express their ideas?
- Do you think audience participation is crucial to the meaning of this artwork? Why/ why not?
- Speculate on the intention of the artist and the meaning of their work. What do you think they are hoping to communicate through their art?

In the classroom

What has inspired and informed this artwork? Undertake some further research into the broader practice of the artist/s and the influences and inspiration for the artwork you saw in the exhibition.

Visual Arts Practices

In the galleries

While visiting *Conflated* you will encounter a wide range of art practices encompassing soft-sculpture, installation, photography, video, performance and collaborative approaches to artmaking. Choose one artist or group of collaborators from the exhibition to explore in depth. Spend some time documenting and drawing your selected artwork.

In the classroom

- Do some online research to find out more about the artist/s you have chosen and the ideas behind their work.
- Examine how the artist/s use materials to create artworks.
- Produce a presentation using tools such as PowerPoint or Google Slides to share what you have learnt about the artists' practice with the class.
- Keep a record of your references along the way and acknowledge them in a bibliography at the end of your presentation.

Present and perform

In the galleries

Reflect on the exhibition design and the audience experience:

- What kind of atmosphere has been created in the galleries for audiences when they visit *Conflated*? Brainstorm a list of adjectives to describe the experience of entering the space.
- What kind of methods have been used to display the video and moving image artworks?
- How has the element of sound been addressed in the space?
- Draw a floorplan of the arrangement of artworks within the galleries. How does each of the artworks relate to one another visually and conceptually?
- What do curators and galleries need to consider when preparing and presenting a contemporary art exhibition?
- How have the co-curators addressed sustainability for this touring exhibition?
- What interactive and participatory experiences have been included in the exhibition?
- How might social distancing regulations related to the Covid-19 pandemic influence the visitor experience in the galleries, especially in relation to the participatory and performance works on display?

Explore and express ideas



Christopher Langton
Breathe In Breathe Out 2021

In the classroom

Experiment with a range of techniques, processes, materials and technologies to express ideas and make artworks inspired by your visit to *Conflated*.

Research the impacts of climate change in Australia and create a diorama of a possible landscape of the future.

In his confronting large-scale installation *Breathe In Breathe Out* sculptor Christopher Langton imagines what it might be like living in a dystopian future impacted by extreme climate change. Imagine the future from your own perspective and create a small-scale diorama of a character in a possible landscape of the future (this could be a maquette for a larger installation):

1. Research and brainstorm some examples of environmental issues and the impacts of climate change in Australia. Choose a topic that is important to you as a source of inspiration for your artwork.
2. What kind of landscape setting have you chosen to depict in your artwork?
3. What kind of people and/or animals would inhabit the world you are creating?
4. Do some sketches to begin planning the sculpture you would like to create. Consider the composition of various elements within the artwork and how they relate to one another.
5. Recycle a shoebox to use as a framing device to contain your diorama.
6. Use a combination of plasticine, polymer clay, air drying clay, found materials and/or paint to construct a small-scale version of your imaginary future inside the shoebox.
7. Consider using colour and lighting for dramatic effect.
8. Give your artwork a title and present your diorama to the class.



Eugenia Lim *Shelters for Kyneton (tradic transfer)* 2022

Explore the performance possibilities of inflatables and wearable sculptures in your own video work.

Exhibiting artists Eugenia Lim and Zoë Bastin have each explored the expressive and poetic qualities of inflatable materials through their video works. The shimmering props and wearable sculptures that appear within their performances were made from Mylar emergency blankets and foil balloons. Use inflatable materials to make something that extends your body, restricts or encourages movement, or influences how you interact with others.

Note to educators: Safety first. Educators are urged to be mindful of the risk of suffocation when working with inflatable materials. This project needs to be directly supervised at all times. It is not recommended for younger students.

1. Source some inflatable materials to work with for this project such as Mylar, balloons and/or readymade plastic inflatables.
2. Design and construct a wearable artwork using the inflatable materials. Consider how what you are making relates to the movement of the body.
3. Choreograph a sequence of movements, dance or performance in which the wearable artwork appears as a costume or prop.
4. Work in groups to record a video of the performance on your mobile phone.
5. Edit the video to include soundtrack.
6. Screen the video for the rest of the class to see.

Sew a soft sculpture inspired by forms from the everyday.

Bronwyn Hack's playful soft sculpture *Alfred* depicts a familiar household item – the humble hot water bottle. Choose an everyday object from your home and recreate it as a soft sculpture.



Bronwyn Hack *Alfred* 2021

Materials you will need

Paper, pencils, paint, scissors, fabric in various colours and textures, needle, pins, thread and/or sewing machine, stuffing

1. Choose a simple domestic object that you would like to turn into a soft sculpture.
2. Design a pattern for each element of your sculpture onto paper, then trace the design onto fabric. Tip: limit the pattern to simple shapes and make the pattern larger than you want because when you sew the pieces together they will lose about 1 cm around the edges.
3. Cut the pieces of your pattern out of your chosen fabric/s and pin the pieces together where you will be sewing
4. Use a running stitch (by hand or machine) to sew the pinned pieces together about 1 cm away from the edge, ensuring you leave a little opening (4-5 cm) unsewn.
5. Turn the stitched pieces inside out to hide the raw edges and create a tidier look.
6. Insert stuffing and close the opening with a hand-stitching technique.
7. Apply any desired surface embellishments using paint, markers and embroidery.
8. Share your creations in a class exhibition.

Glossary

Carbon footprint: the total greenhouse gas emissions caused by a particular process or event.

Conflate: to combine two or more sets of ideas into one.

Contemporary art: the art of today, produced by artists who are living and working now. Contemporary art provides an opportunity to reflect on contemporary society and the issues relevant to ourselves, and the world around us.

Diorama: a model representing a three-dimensional scene in miniature.

First Nations People or First Australians: Persons of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. The term reflects the diversity of cultures of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups

Inflatable art: a sculpture created using materials such as stretchable fabric, rubber or plastic which, when filled with air or another gas, achieves its intended form.

Installation art: large-scale, mixed-media artworks often made for a site-specific, temporary exhibition.

Monstrous feminine: cultural theorist Barbara Creed identifies and challenges seven key archetypes of female monstrosity in her seminal psychoanalytical critique *The Monstrous-Feminine* (1993).

Multidisciplinary art: art that blurs the boundaries between traditional categories of painting, drawing and sculpture.

Multisensory art: art that engages more than once sense at a time.

Mylar: a strong and versatile polyester film most often used in emergency blanket material and foil balloons.

Omphalos (or Omphalus): the scar where the umbilical cord was attached, most commonly known as the belly button.

Participatory art: an approach to making art in which the audience is engaged directly in the creative process. This type of art is incomplete without audience interaction.

Performance art: a live performance, usually presented to an audience and often within a gallery context. Performance art involves a performer or performers, a site and can involve an audience. It can combine music, dance, poetry, theatre, visual art and video. The artwork resulting from a performance event might be the live event itself or its documentation in photographs, videos or objects. Performance art may be either scripted or unscripted, narrative driven, random or carefully choreographed, spontaneous or carefully planned, and with or without audience participation.

Socially engaged art: collaborative, often participatory and involving human interaction and social discourse as the medium of the work.

Soft sculpture: post-1960s sculptures made using unconventional materials such as cloth and canvas. Pop art artist Claes Oldenburg is often acknowledged as the original creator of soft sculpture.

Sound-based art: art that uses sound as its medium.

Synthetic materials: materials made from chemicals or substances that are not natural – for example: plastic, nylon, vinyl.

Video art: art that involves the use of audio-visual material.

Conflated

A NETS Victoria touring exhibition, curated by
Zoë Bastin and Claire Watson.

Published by NETS Victoria

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Exhibition Brand: Ainger Creative

Education Resource Design: Sweet Creative



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program and the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria.

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NETS Victoria pays tribute to the ongoing culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) Peoples of the Kulin Nation as the traditional custodians of the lands and waters on which our office operates.

NETS Victoria is grateful for the generous support of our valued partners.

National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, and by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. NETS Victoria also receives significant in-kind support from the National Gallery of Victoria.



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National Exhibitions
Touring Support Victoria

The Ian Potter Centre:
NGV Australia
Federation Square
PO Box 7259
Melbourne VIC 8004

03 8662 1507
info@netsvictoria.org

netsvictoria.org.au