

EDUCATION RESOURCE

Octopus 18: Mother Tongue
Curated by Kimberly Moulton



Joi Arcand, *Amber Motors*, 2018

Participating Artists: Joi Arcand (Muskeg Lake Cree Nation, Canada), Megan Cope (Quandamooka), Kirsten Lyttle (Waikato, Tainui A Whiro, Ngaati Tahinga, NZ (Melbourne based)), Vicki Couzens (Kirrae Wurrong), Lisa Hilli (Makurategete Vunatarai (clan) Tolai / Gunantuna people of Papua New Guinea) and Nakia Cadd.

Initiated in 2001, the *Octopus* series of exhibitions supports ambitious curatorial practice, through engaging an invited curator annually to develop a project that draws upon their research interests and provides a platform for new forms of exhibition making. In 2018 Gertrude is delighted to be working with Kimberley Moulton, a Yorta Yorta woman, and currently the Senior Curator of South Eastern Aboriginal Collections, Melbourne Museum.

Octopus 2018 will feature female First Nations artists who use written and oral languages to both influence their work and shift the white paradigm of ownership in relation to land, bodies and identity. This exhibition will aim to explore the way in which First Peoples can de-centre the western art canon through the intersection of art practice, language and cultural knowledge and highlight the significant role women play in the assertion of Sovereignty.

7-10 CURRICULUM LINKS

Visual Arts Levels 7 – 8

Explore and Express:

VCAVAE033

Explore visual arts practices as inspiration to explore and develop themes, concepts or ideas in artworks

VCAVAE034

Explore how artists use materials, techniques, technologies and processes to realise their intentions in art works

Respond and Interpret:

VCAVAR039

Identify and connect specific features of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary times, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Visual Arts Levels 9 - 10

Explore and Express

VCAVAE040

Explore the visual arts practices and styles as inspiration to develop a personal style, explore, express ideas, concepts and themes in art works

VCAVAE041

Explore how artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and express their intentions in art works

Respond and Interpret:

VCAVARo45

Analyse and interpret artworks to explore the different forms of expression, intentions and viewpoints of artists and how they are viewed by audiences

VCAVARo46

Analyse, interpret and evaluate a range of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary contexts, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to explore differing viewpoints

7 – 10 LEARNING ACTIVITY

Questions:

- How does language carry power?
- *Octopus 2018* features “female First Nations artists who use written and oral languages to both influence their work and shift the white paradigm of ownership in relation to land, bodies and identity.” What do you think this means and what forms do these artworks take within the context of the exhibition?
- How have artists such as Vicki Couzens (Kirrae Wurrongr) re-contextualised and reimagined cultural materials?
*Think also about the importance of an understanding and recognition of living cultures.
- How does this exhibition critique the idea of traditional versus contemporary cultural forms? Why do you think these ideas can be problematic?

Suggestion:

The “*Octopus* series of exhibitions supports ambitious curatorial practice, through engaging an invited curator annually to develop a project that draws upon their research interests and provides a platform for new forms of exhibition making”.

Look and read what you can in the exhibition space, how do you think Senior Curator and Yorta Yorta woman Kimberly Moulton’s exhibition, has pushed the boundaries of conventional exhibition making? Think about, themes, representation, design, choice of artists and artworks etc.

Activity:

Develop an exhibition proposal that you believe extends the boundaries of traditional/conventional exhibition making. What ideas, topics concerns do you have that you believe are hidden, misunderstood or deliberately sidelined within contemporary society?

As you develop your own exhibition proposal, think back to an exhibition you have recently seen:

- What did you see, hear and feel in the exhibition?
- What was going on and what do you believe unified the artworks and the artists in the show?
- Was the exhibition communicating a particular idea or viewpoint? If so how was this expressed?

VCE CURRICULUM LINKS

VCE Studio Art

Unit 4

Area of Study 3: Art Industry Contexts

You will visit a variety of art exhibitions and examine the different methods and roles undertaken in the preparation and presentation of art to the public.

VCE Art

Unit 4:

Area of Study 1: Discussing Art

In this area of study students discuss art ideas and issues and the varying interpretations about the role of art in society. Students select a statement about an art idea and related issues that they research, analyse and interpret.

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Question:

Curator Kimberly Moulton has said “*Many First Peoples are in the process of the revival and reclamation of language, (and) artists play an important role*” in this.

- What do you think this statement means?
- How do you see these ideas and your own interpretations of these ideas illustrated in the exhibition, *Mother Tongue*?
- What roles do you think artists play in this process of reclamation and revival?

Suggestion:

- The “*Octopus* series of exhibitions supports ambitious curatorial practice, through engaging an invited curator annually to develop a project that draws upon their research interests and provides a platform for new forms of exhibition making”.
Look and read what you can in the exhibition space, how do you think Senior curator and Yorta Yorta woman Kimberley Moulton has pushed the boundaries of conventional exhibition making? Think about, themes, representation, design, choice of artworks etc.
- As you move around the exhibition think about and discuss how the artists’ have used specific materials, techniques and processes to visually express their ideas. Also think about and discuss the historical and cultural context in which the artist is working.

Activity:

During your visit to Gertrude Contemporary speak to a staff member about how they develop their exhibitions i.e. curatorial themes, exhibition design, promotion and how they maintain and care for their artworks during the exhibition cycle. Next, visit a larger public art institution and ask a staff member a similar series of questions. Compare and contrast the information you have learnt about these two exhibition spaces.

Glossary

Yorta Yorta – The Yorta Yorta, also known as Jotijota, are an indigenous Australian people who have traditionally inhabited the area surrounding the junction of the Goulburn and Murray Rivers in present-day north-eastern Victoria and southern New South Wales.

First Nations / peoples – These terms refer to those who identify as being descendent from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. There are many languages, communities and cultures within this category from all around Australia.

Curator – Traditionally, a curator was someone who cared for a collection of artworks or artefacts within a gallery or museum. In this case, a curator is someone who researches, designs and organises an exhibition around a specific theme or idea.

De-center – To de-center is to move away from the accepted 'centre' of the art-world, generally away from art and exhibitions by white artists and curators with European heritage, towards exhibitions and works inclusive of by artists of colour, varying cultures.

Western art canon – The Western art canon is a body of work that stems from a white, European heritage, that has shaped the way we look at and appreciate contemporary art throughout history, often leaving out the stories of Indigenous Australian artists as well as those from Africa and Asia.

White paradigm – The white paradigm refers to the tools we have been given throughout history to appreciate and understand contemporary art from a Western perspective, failing to include the importance of works by artists from other cultures.

Art practice – In Visual Arts the use of conceptual and practical processes in art making such as the use of sources of inspiration, exploration of ideas, exploration of and experimentation with materials and techniques, and the development and refinement of art works.

Audience/s – Individuals or groups of people who experience the arts in a range of settings and contexts (formal, informal, virtual or interactive) through intellectual, emotional and social engagement.

Artists and Artworks – Artist is the term for the creators and makers of an artwork. Artwork is the term for a work or performance.

Sovereignty – A country or community's power to independently rule themselves.

Key Resources

Gertrude Contemporary: <http://www.gertrude.org.au>

Kimberley Moulton: <https://museums victoria.com.au/about-us/staff/humanities/indigenous-cultures/kimberley-moulton/>

Megan Cope: <https://thisisnofantasy.com/artist/megan-cope/>

Joi Arcand: <http://www.joitarcand.com/>

Kirsten Lyttle: <http://kirstenlyttle.com.au/about-2/>

Vicki Couzens: <http://footscrayarts.com/profile/vicki-couzens/>

Lisa Hilli: <https://lisahilli.com/>

Melbourne Museum: <https://museums victoria.com.au/melbournemuseum/>