

VCE Studio Arts: Art Industry Contexts Online Exhibition Resource for "The Unquiet Landscape"



Castlemaine Art Museum exterior. Image: CAM.

HOW TO USE THIS EDUCATION RESOURCE

This education resource is to help VCE Studio Arts teachers and students explore the exhibition "The Unquiet Landscape" at Castlemaine Art Museum (CAM).

This online resource provides curriculum-focused information about how the curator, Jenny Long, worked with art industry professionals at Castlemaine Art Museum (CAM) to prepare and present artworks for the exhibition. Two works from the exhibition are examined in depth as case studies in relation to methods and considerations for conservation and display.

Teachers and students are encouraged to visit CAM to explore the exhibition. CAM staff are happy to answer specific questions. Email frontofhouse@castlemainegallery.com

CURRICULUM LINKS

2020 adjusted curriculum
for VCE Studio Arts:
Unit 4, Outcome 3,
Art Industry Contexts



"The Unquiet Landscape", Whitchell Gallery installation, Castlemaine Art Museum, 2019. Foreground, Unknown maker (possibly from central Australia), *Kangaroo or Wallaby* c1931, Castlemaine Art Museum. Acquired by Mr Albert Miles, Castlemaine in 1931. Image: Brodie Ellis.

Introduction to Castlemaine Art Museum

CAM is a regional gallery located on Dja Dja Wurrung country in the culturally vibrant artistic community of Castlemaine. Established in 1913, it is unique in the Australian cultural landscape as a gallery established by community subscription. It moved into purpose-built premises in 1931. Its heritage-listed building is one of the earliest examples of Modernist architecture in regional Victoria.

CAM collects, cares for and exhibits artworks, objects and cultural belongings, which are held in its art and social history collections. From time to time CAM borrows artworks from private art collections, institutions and artists.

CAM curates and presents a calendar of temporary and touring exhibitions. Works are interpreted through catalogue essays, wall texts and online via CAM website and social media posts. To engage audiences, CAM hosts events and public programs which the community can attend. It also delivers education programs for students and teachers.

CAM has a small retail area where it promotes and sells art books and a selection of items made by local artisans and designers.

CAM has been sustained through community effort for over one hundred years. It receives triennial state support through Creative Victoria and local government support from the Mount Alexander Shire Council. CAM also has significant financial support from an anonymous benefactor courtesy of Smith & Singer, and other philanthropic support. Donations to CAM are tax deductible. Regular and crucial support is also received through the local community, including through the Friends of the Castlemaine Art Museum and donations given when visitors enter the gallery. CAM also has a wide range of in-kind supporters that donate or provide goods and services at cost, including Art Guide Australia, Tint Design and local businesses such as Union Studio Art Framers.

Collection

CAM holds one of the most important collections of Australian art in regional Victoria. The collection has a strong emphasis on landscape painting and includes major works from the 19th and 20th centuries. Contemporary artists are also represented, with a focus on Central Victorian artists.

Cultural belongings and artworks made by First Nations artists have been included in the CAM collection from its inception. Many of these items were gifted to the museum during a time when very little information was collected about the artists. Today CAM is consulting with First Nations people to find out more about these works. In 2020 CAM repatriated a suite of cultural belongings to the traditional First Nations owners on the specialist advice of Aboriginal Victoria. This is a very formal legal process and an important undertaking in the reconciliation process between First Nations people and the settler community.

CAM is also the custodian of a fascinating collection of items of local significance including historical documents, photographs, fashion and decorative arts from the Mount Alexander Goldfields District.

Organisational Structure

CAM is unusual for a regional gallery because it is owned by a Trust, rather than by local government. CAM has a Board of Directors, a small team of professional staff including a Director, Front of House Manager and Assistant Gallery Manager, and a large group of volunteers who are crucial to CAM's ongoing operations. Other specialists that assist CAM include consultants who are experts in collections management, curating, conservation, bookkeeping, website development, graphic design and education. When new exhibitions are being installed, CAM employs local artists with installation experience as art handlers.

For more information visit castlemainegallery.com

Exhibition Case Study:

"The Unquiet Landscape"



"The Unquiet Landscape", Whitchell Gallery installation, Castlemaine Art Museum, 2019.
Image: Felix Wilson.

Exhibition Brief

In 2019 CAM's new Director, Naomi Cass, invited Bendigo-based curator Jenny Long to guest curate a thematic group exhibition at CAM. For this project, Long proposed revitalising the exhibition in the Whitchell Gallery which had not been altered for many years.

The new exhibition recontextualises a selection of major, framed oil paintings, decorative arts and ephemera from CAM's permanent collection, alongside previously unexhibited artworks by First Nations artists from the CAM collection and works on loan from Australian contemporary artists, including First Nations artists.

A Literary Theme

The 1922 novel *Kangaroo*, by renowned British author DH Lawrence, was selected as a lens through which to re-imagine the CAM collection.

Kangaroo was chosen because it includes elements that correspond to the subject matter of major works in the CAM collection (landscapes and portraits) but also contains elements that have not been visible in the collection (the presence of First Nations people, tensions between proto-fascist nationalist and socialists in the aftermath of World War 1). Lawrence and his wife visited Australia in 1922 and during this visit he wrote beautifully about the Australian landscape, beach and regional towns.



Christian Thompson, b. 1978, *Sip from the Unseen*, 2017, c-type print on Fuji Pearl Metallic Paper. Courtesy the artist and Sarah Scout Presents.

Jenny Long has carefully paired each artwork in the exhibition with a quotation from the book in order to set up a conversation between image and text that encourages viewers to approach familiar collection works in new ways. In the past, visitors to the permanent collection were usually left with the impression that the 1920s and 30s in Australia were a golden arcadia. Lawrence's novel challenges that view and reminds us of the bitter struggles that were taking place in the shadows, concerning what kind of society Australia should be.

Lawrence's characters in the novel represent two opposing political movements that correspond to Fascism and Communism, which, at the time, were just fledgling movements. In 1922 these were new, untested and exciting ideas resonating in Australia and across the world. In the novel, the character of Kangaroo is a Sydney lawyer and the leader of a Fascist movement made up of returned service men, while the Socialists are represented by Willie Struthers, the local leader of the trade union movement.

The characters embody nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes that were widespread in Australia (such as support for the White Australia Policy). Lawrence uses the character of a returned soldier, Jack, as a mouthpiece for many of the attitudes which he most disliked in Australian society.

In the novel, unlike most European Australian writers of the period, DH Lawrence acknowledged a strong sense of the presence of First Nations peoples in the landscape. This provided an opportunity to include several works by unknown historical First Nations artists in the exhibition, as well as works by contemporary First Nations artists Leah King-Smith and Christian Thompson.

The novel is set in the same period that CAM's collection was being formed and many of its most important works were produced. There are some fascinating parallels between the themes of the novel and the works of art and objects in the permanent collection. For instance, the political themes enabled the curator to include works such as Noel Counihan's linocuts of miners (DH Lawrence was a coal miner's son) and objects from the museum such as wonderful historical photos of local workers in Castlemaine during a May Day march.

Curatorial intention and process

Curating an exhibition is a spatial practice: it's about enticing a viewer to walk through a gallery space exploring visual art and occasionally sound art. Curators use art, objects, lighting, wall colours, sound and signage to please, challenge and move viewers.

A sound work of Central Victorian bird song has been included in "The Unquiet Landscape", gently setting the scene for the exhibition.

To select the artworks for "The Unquiet Landscape" Jenny Long undertook extensive research on site at CAM in the galleries and museum storage areas. Drawing on her knowledge of historical Australian art as well as contemporary art, she developed a list of works that would excite visitors by presenting well-known work in an innovative, even risky new context, using the DH Lawrence novel.

Works from CAM's permanent collection were selected for their aesthetic qualities and capacity to carry the theme of the exhibition. The curatorial intention was to include a cross-section of beloved paintings that are familiar to the local community alongside lesser-known objects highlighting the presence of work by First Nations artists within the collection.



Procession down Mostyn Street Castlemaine c1920s, black and white photograph. Castlemaine Historical Museum.



Employees of Thompsons Foundry c1919 black and white photograph Castlemaine Historical Museum. Gift of Elizabeth Jones

To augment works from the permanent collection, Long approached numerous contemporary artists and collectors to loan works. When speaking to living artists or lenders, Long discussed the theme and context for the exhibition of the work and any special conditions the artist or lender may have regarding installation. Once an agreement was in place, insurance and transport were arranged for each of the borrowed artworks.

Long decided not to include many works on paper in the exhibition due to the conservation challenges they present in CAM's historic Whitchell Gallery, which is lit with conventional museum lighting and natural light from skylights above. Although the skylights are now UV protected and CAM can keep lighting within an acceptable range, prolonged exposure to light can cause damage to works on paper. To protect the watercolours, photography and prints in the exhibition, they are covered with cloth covers when the gallery is not open to the public.

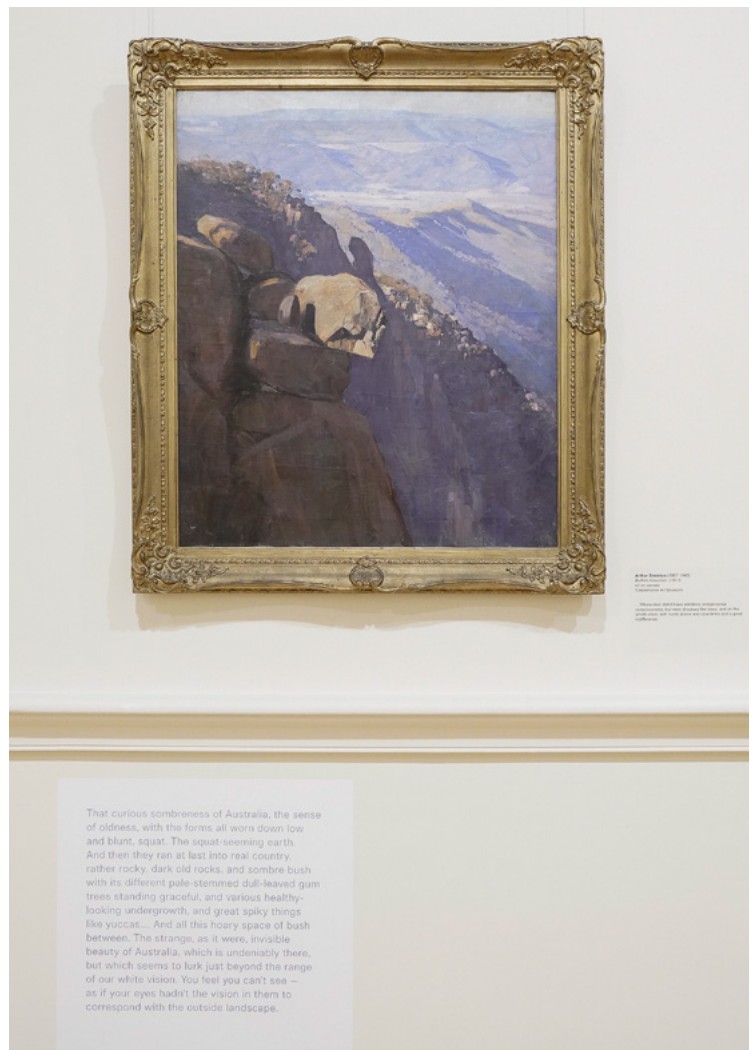
To resolve the final layout of artworks, Long and Cass spent time in the gallery with the selected artworks and artefacts, arranging and rearranging them until the relationships between them made perfect sense, both in terms of the meaning of the works and the formal beauty of their relationships.

It is important to note that the relationship between the novel written in 1922 and the works of art is a fictional construct to engage audiences. This is an innovative way of creating an interesting experience for visitors and interpreting both literature and visual art.

LIST OF EXHIBITING ARTISTS

Rick Amor b1948
 Clarice Beckett 1887–1935
 Penleigh Boyd 1890–1923
 Rupert Bunny 1864–1947
 George Coates 1869–1930
 Noel Counihan 1913–1986
 John Farmer 1897–1989
 E Phillips Fox 1865–1915
 Siri Hayes b1977
 Ruth Hutchinson b1963
 Leah King–Smith (Bigambul) b1957
 Listening Earth
 DH Lawrence 1885–1930
 Sydney Long 1871–1955
 Frederick McCubbin 1855–1917
 WB McInnes 1889–1939
 Linda Marrinon b1959

Otto Pareroutja (Arrernte) 1914–1973
 Ambrose Patterson 1877–1966
 John Ford Paterson 1851–1912
 James Quinn 1869–1951
 Lloyd Rees 1895–1988
 Cameron Robbins b1963
 Arnold Shore 1897–1963
 Dawn Sime 1932–2001
 Arthur Streeton 1867–1943
 Eric Thake 1904–1982
 Christian Thompson (Bidjara) b1978
 May Vale 1862–1945
 Leslie Wilkie 1879–1935
 John Wolseley (b 1938) & Stewart Russell
 (b.1960), Spacecraft Studio
 unknown makers



"The Unquiet Landscape", Whitchell Gallery installation, Castlemaine Art Museum, 2019. Note placement of a large quote on the wall below Arthur Streeton's painting, *Buffalo Mountain* c1913, and on the small wall label next to the artwork.

Design for wall texts

Jenny Long read the novel *Kangaroo* multiple times to identify quotes to pair with each work of art in the exhibition. Because DH Lawrence was also an artist, he writes in a way that is very visual, which supported the process of setting up a dialogue between artworks and the text. Long decided to include quotes drawn from *Kangaroo* on the walls of the gallery with the intention to evoke the emotions of audiences as they experience the exhibition. This strategy was used instead of providing traditional wall texts (which typically contain information about the artist's style or the subject matter).

The use of various quotes to accompany artworks in the exhibition led to the display of an unusually large number of text panels on the walls. Considerations for the design of these text panels included the font size (which needed to be big enough for all people to easily read, yet not so big as to distract from the works of art) and the colour of the font (which needed to be harmonious with the works of art).

Transport and installation methods

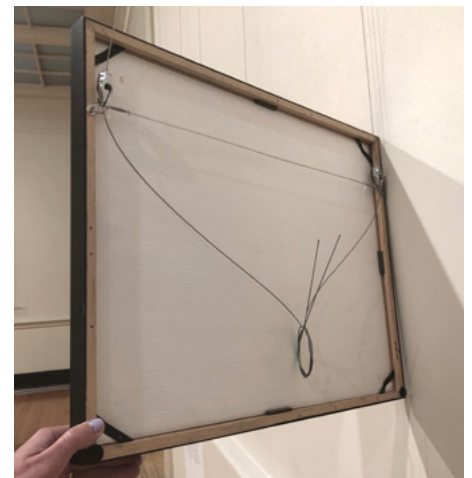
Each of the artworks on loan for the exhibition was carefully wrapped and couriered to the museum. Upon arrival, condition reports were completed and filed for insurance purposes.

Frames, plinths and display cases were cleaned by a conservator prior to their installation in the galleries.

CAM employed a team of experienced art-handlers to install "The Unquiet Landscape". To protect the artworks from damage during the process they wore gloves and worked together to move large artworks on an A-frame museum trolley.

Paintings in the exhibition were installed using a very traditional hanging system, consisting of wire straps suspended from picture rails. These straps are secured onto 2 "D-rings" on the back of each frame. It is most important for the safety of a framed work that it be hung from two points on the frame rather than hung from a single point or from a wire strung across the back of the painting.

Wall labels and introductory text were installed directly on the gallery walls using wall vinyl.



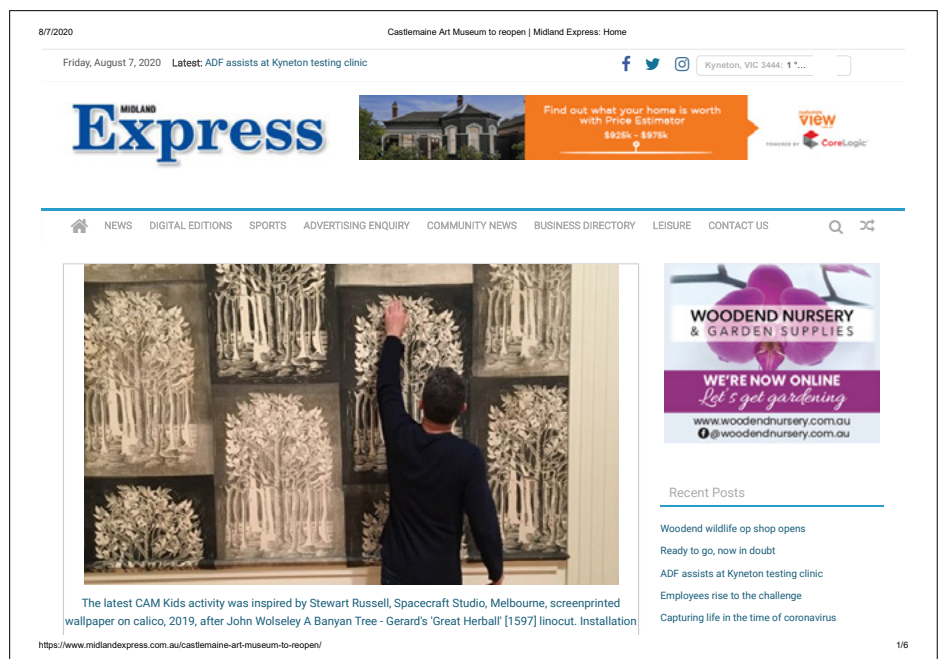
Verso (back) of framed work showing wire hanging system and security clip attaching wire to "D-rings". Image: Brodie Ellis.

Marketing and promotions

CAM promoted "The Unquiet Landscape" via the CAM website and to followers via social media posts. Another form of direct marketing at CAM happens via emails (EDMs or Electronic Direct Mail) and event invitations sent to artists, community subscribers and supporters.

Word of mouth and social media are hugely important for an organisation without a marketing budget. CAMs most powerful marketing tool is happy visitors and its visitors range from local members of the community to tourists from across Australia and beyond. Further, Castlemaine's local newspaper, The Midland Express, published an editorial article about the exhibition, drawing it to the attention of wider audiences:

[midlandexpress.com.au/castlemaine-art-museum-reopens-its-doors/he](https://www.midlandexpress.com.au/castlemaine-art-museum-reopens-its-doors/he)

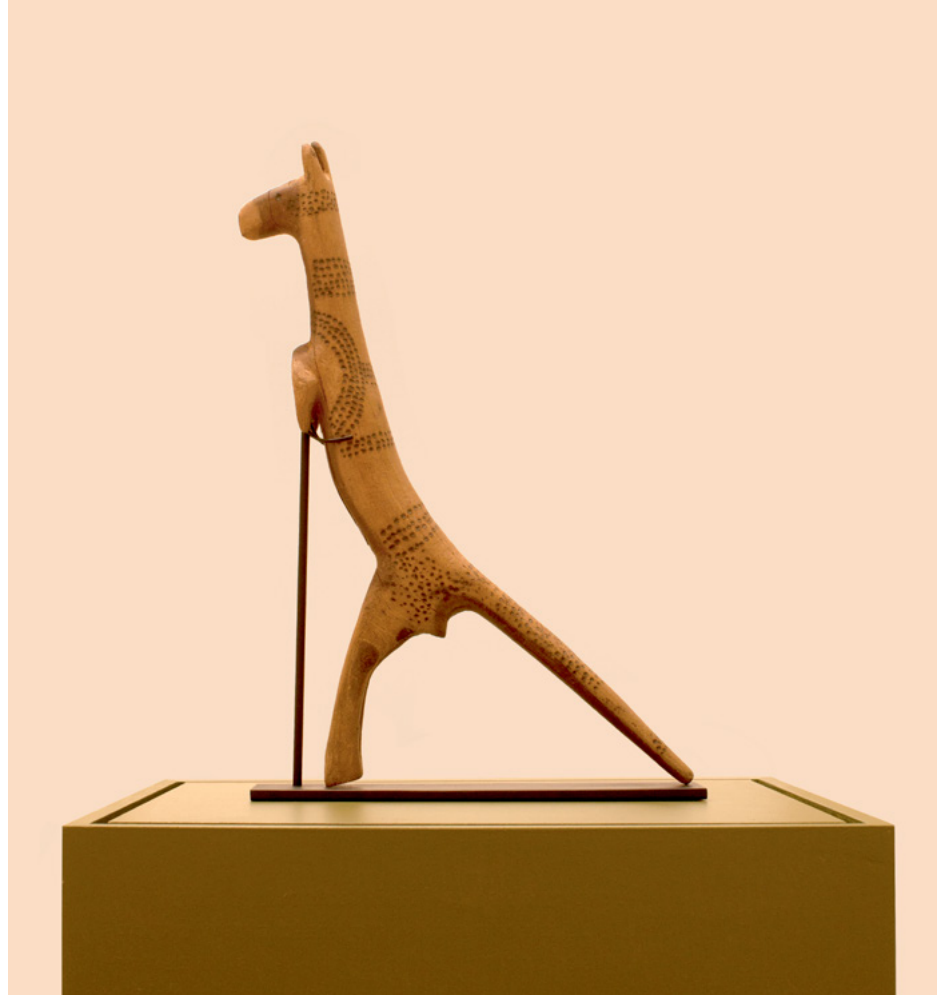


Midland Express, 8 July 2020.

Artwork: Case Study 1

Unknown Maker

Kangaroo or Wallaby c 1931



Unknown maker (possibly from central Australia), *Kangaroo or Wallaby*, c1931, Castlemaine Art Museum. Acquired by Mr Albert Miles, Castlemaine in 1931. Image: Janina Green

Unknown maker (possibly from central Australia), *Kangaroo or Wallaby* c1931, carved from the fork of a mulga tree and decorated with poker work possibly for the tourist trade. Castlemaine Art Museum. Acquired by Mr Albert Miles, Castlemaine in 1931.

"Two kangaroos. And the blood in Richard's veins all gone dark with a sort of sad tenderness. The gentle kangaroos, with their weight in heavy blood on the ground in their great tail! It wasn't love he felt for them, but a dark, an animal tenderness, and another sort of consciousness, deeper than human." — **DH Lawrence**

Methods and considerations for display and conservation

Kangaroo or Wallaby is a wooden sculpture held in CAM's permanent collection of works by First Nations artists. This collection has been assessed by Aboriginal Victoria as very significant. Sadly, and like many museums in the past, when *Kangaroo or Wallaby* was collected, very little information was recorded about the artist, where they lived or their intention for the artwork.

In the exhibition, *Kangaroo or Wallaby* is displayed standing upright on a green museum plinth under a Perspex lid. Visitors can move around the artwork and view the sculpture in the round.

Curator Jenny Long selected this work for "The Unquiet Landscape" because of its direct relationship to the literary theme of the exhibition and for its unique and striking nature. The object had been in storage for many years, and so "The Unquiet Landscape" exhibition presented a timely opportunity for audiences to see it out on display in the galleries.

As Long prepared this historical work for presentation, she had it assessed by an art conservator, as works made from wood are susceptible to changes in temperature and humidity. The conservator observed some small cracks, and advised that the best way to stabilise the work and protect it while on display would be to display it under a Perspex lid.

Long also discovered that the sculpture does not stand up or balance on its own, and this could indicate that it was originally made for hand-held use and not for display in a museum. For maximum visual effect, *Kangaroo or Wallaby* needed to be upright, and so the sculpture was measured, and a support stand was devised and fabricated by a local metalwork artist.



Right: Pre-installation photographs of the Unknown maker (possibly from central Australia), *Kangaroo or Wallaby* c1931. Image: CAM

POKERWORK

This sculpture has been decorated using "pokerwork". This describes a method where a heated metal point is used to burn a design onto wood or leather.

CAM is currently also exhibiting some fabulous contemporary "pokerwork" by local First Nations artist Alvin Darcy Briggs (Yorta Yorta, Taungwurrung). A great exponent of this artform, Briggs explains "I learnt craft from my family and Elders. I've been drawing since I could walk. I was drawing realistically by the time I was 12 and have always been encouraged to draw. My dad made artefacts, design and pokerwork. Now I make artefacts. He introduced me to the machine I use today, which utilises a heated wire to make free marks... I like to make portraits of native animals in a powerful stance, to honour them and show their beauty."



Alvin Briggs (Yorta Yorta, Taungwurrung), *Untitled (crow)* 2019. Collection of Camilo Demarco.
Image: Brodie Ellis.

Briggs's works are unframed wood panels exhibited in CAM's foyer. Rather than lay them flat, the display method has been to rest them on Perspex "rises" to elevate them slightly.

Artwork: Case Study 2

John Wolseley and Stewart Russell

Wallpaper 2019



Installation image, Noel Counihan, (*The Miner Series*) 1947 and Stewart Russell, Spacecraft Studio, Melbourne, screenprinted wallpaper on calico 2019, after John Wolseley, *A Banyan Tree* - Gerard's 'Great Herball', 1597, linocut. Copyright Stewart Russell, Spacecraft Studio and John Wolseley. Image: Brodie Ellis

Methods and considerations for display and conservation

This collaborative work brings together the expertise of contemporary artists John Wolseley and Stewart Russell. Together they created a reusable, ephemeral artwork rather than a framed static object. This contemporary large-scale work is included in the exhibition to add visual variety and create impact in the gallery.

Jenny Long wanted to disrupt the traditional straight row of framed works installed against a cream-coloured wall, as seen throughout the gallery, so she commissioned the artists to make a wallpaper which could be easily installed and removed. This wallpaper work forms a background upon which to overlay a striking suite of gritty black and white lino-prints of mine workers from the CAM collection, made by Noel Counihan in 1947.

Counihan's black and white lino-prints called for a monochrome background, and John Wolseley selected an image of a banyan tree based on an illustration in a 16th century botanical publication called *Gerards Herbal History of Plants*. In many cultures the space under the banyan tree is a meeting place, so it seemed conceptually appropriate to place as a background to the struggling workers gathering in Counihan's print series.

Knowing that the Counihan prints were going to be overlayed on the wallpaper, Stewart Russell then designed and printed the panels. He enlarged and reversed the colours of Wolseley's banyan tree and then printed a series of them on large sections of calico.

Stewart Russell also visited CAM to install the prints directly to the gallery wall using wallpaper paste. This process is reversible, meaning the calico panels can be removed, washed and reused. Each panel is unique, and Russell meticulously installed each piece to ensure that it created maximum visual impact.

The framed Counihan prints were then hung on straps from the picture rail on top of the wallpaper.



Noel Counihan, *Brace Boy ... first step to the pits (The Miner Series)*, 1947, Castlemaine Art Museum. Purchased with the assistance of the Caltex-Victorian Government Art Fund to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the State of Victoria, 1984. Courtesy Noel Counihan Estate. Image: Ian Hill.

Further reading

JOHN WOLSELEY

One of Australia's most distinguished artists, John Wolseley was born in Somerset, England in 1938 and arrived in Australia in 1976. His work in watercolour, drawing, printmaking and installation over the last 40 years has been a meditation on how the earth is a dynamic system of which we are all a part. <https://www.johnwolseley.net/>

STEWART RUSSELL

Artist Stewart Russell founded Spacecraft Studio in 2000. Over twenty years he has built a screen-printing practice that specialises in bespoke collaborations with artists and designers. <https://www.spacecraftaustralia.com>

NOEL COUNIHAN

Melbourne born Noel Jack Counihan was an artist and revolutionary who attended evening classes at the National Gallery of Victoria's drawing school when he was 16. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noel_Counihan

WALLPAPER

The history of wallpaper is fascinating, not only as a history of domesticity, but of technology, fashion and taste: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/a-brief-history-of-wallpaper>

POKERWORK OR PYROGRAPHY

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pyrography#:~:text=Pyrography%20or%20pyrogravure%20is%20the,as%20pokerwork%20or%20wood%20burning.>

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