

# SCULPTURE IS EVERYTHING

## AN EDUCATION RESOURCE FOR ALL TEACHING LEVELS

### FOR TEACHERS

This resource will assist teachers to explore the ideas and themes in the exhibition 'Sculpture is Everything'. It focuses on seven works to investigate some of the major ideas contemporary artists use in their practice.

'Sculpture could be everything, but this doesn't mean that everything could be sculpture — it takes an artist to make it happen.'

Zilvinas Kempinas

'Sculpture is Everything' asks us to question what sculpture is. It dismantles the idea that sculpture is primarily concerned with medium and form. In Europe and North America, after the 1960s, the idea of what constituted sculpture expanded as artists began to incorporate film, photography, painting and performance. A breakdown of media-based disciplines followed and emphasis shifted to the ideas that framed art and the processes that produced it. Contemporary sculpture does not necessarily belong to one tradition or cultural story, and can encompass work from anywhere.

This exhibition features art works from many different traditions and which use a wide variety of materials. The works cross categories of media and have multiple layers of meaning. Some art works can also be read 'in conversation' with the works near them in the gallery space, especially as they touch on some of the recurring themes in the exhibition. Some of these themes include:

- the breakdown of traditional categories of media
- the use of recycled materials and found objects
- the effects of colonisation
- objects with ritual or spiritual significance
- sculpture and performance
- the use of unexpected forms and materials that cause us to question what we are seeing and experiencing.

### KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

#### Visual Arts

Students will:

- consider the different approaches to making contemporary sculpture
- respond to the diverse materials and frameworks that the artists have used to create their works
- reflect on the ways visual documentation is used in art practice
- identify the ways audiences are encouraged to view particular works
- reflect on their own learning
- apply their knowledge and understanding to inform their own sculptural works (e.g. researching, developing, resolving and reflecting on the progression of their ideas in their visual arts diaries).

#### English

Students will:

- analyse and interpret sculptures
- use contemporary sculpture as a starting point to construct narratives
- explore symbolism (i.e. how artists use symbolism to communicate ideas and meanings through their works).

#### Studies of Society and the Environment/Modern History

Students will:

- identify and describe trends and movements in the visual arts and discuss how issues of time, place and cultural influence and difference are reflected in contemporary sculpture
- consider the way people, places, events, ideas and emotions are represented
- deconstruct contemporary sculpture in relation to social, cultural, historical, spiritual, political, technological and economic contexts.

## FOR STUDENTS

### *What is sculpture?*

Traditionally, when we think of sculpture, we think of a life-like figure made from marble or bronze. Sculptures may commemorate a significant event or the life of someone who led a distinguished life. You have probably seen examples of public sculptures which recognise the sacrifices of armed forces personnel who have died fighting in conflicts and wars around the world.

### *Why do artists make sculptures today?*

'Sculpture is Everything' will challenge you to think about ways of making sculpture.

For many artists today, the creative idea is the most important aspect of making an art work, and they choose whatever materials will help them express that idea best. Artists from all over the world contribute to the field of contemporary art, which is now a meeting place for many different cultures. New gallery spaces, like the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA), have changed the way sculptures are made because artists now have huge spaces in which to exhibit their works.

### *What makes sculpture different today?*

As you walk through the exhibition, think about the following aspects of the works on display:

- materials
- scale
- installation techniques
- the use of found objects
- the use of ceremonial or ritual objects
- performance techniques
- the importance of photography and documentation
- the different perspectives and viewpoints suggested by some works.

## FOR REFLECTION

The art works in 'Sculpture is Everything' cover a broad range of geographic locations, ideas and processes.

*Can you explain why the exhibition is called 'Sculpture is Everything'?*



Michael Parekwhai *The Horn of Africa* 2006

## PUBLIC ART

Public art refers to art works which are installed in public places — parks, shopping centres or in the foyers or forecourts of commercial and government buildings. Public art is located where it can be seen by lots of people going about their daily routine.

### SCOTT REDFORD

*The High / Perpetual Xmas, No Abstractions* 2008

Art work location: outside GOMA entrance

Scott Redford's work refers to popular visual culture, especially the culture of surfing and the beach. He blurs the distinction between advertising and art and explores how both art and popular culture affect the way we see the world.

*The High / Perpetual Xmas, No Abstractions* 2008 is like a monument to the kitsch, the glamour and the escapism of mass tourism, and the importance of tourism in shaping the Gold Coast.

*If you saw this work by the side of the road at the Gold Coast, would you think it was a work of art?*

*What makes it a sculpture and not a sign advertising a motel?*



Some artists use found and recycled objects in their art works. They create art from existing objects which are re-used to give them new meaning, either by showing them in a different environment or context, or by combining them with recycled objects to make something completely new.

## FOUND OBJECTS AND RECYCLING

### ROMUALD HAZOUMÈ

*Liberté* 2009

Art work location: GOMA Foyer cabinet

Romuald Hazoumè's masks are constructed from various found items — porcupine quills, discarded household appliances, fabric and jerry cans (plastic containers) used to smuggle petrol. In this work, Hazoumè comments on the relationships between African nations and those countries that are more affluent, such as the United States.

- This sculpture is called *Liberté* and looks quite similar to a very famous statue in New York City. *What is its name? What does it symbolise?*
- The materials used in this sculpture are mostly recycled from materials that people have thrown away during the course of their day. *How many materials can you identify?*
- When Hazoumè's work is exhibited in countries with a high standard of living, like Australia, how do you think this might be understood? *What do you think the artist is trying to tell us?*

A number of other artists have used recycled materials to create their sculptures in the exhibition.

*Can you identify other works that use recycled materials?*



## PERFORMANCE AND DOCUMENTATION

Performance art is art activity that is undertaken in front of an audience and camera. Photographic documentation is an important part of performance art because it makes a permanent record of the event for those unable to witness the performance.

### AI WEIWEI

*Dropping a Han dynasty urn* 1995  
Art work location: Gallery 1.1, GOMA

Ai Weiwei's *Dropping a Han dynasty urn* 1995 is composed of three large-scale black-and-white photographs depicting the artist in the act of dropping a highly valuable, millennia-old ceramic urn. This deliberately shocking act makes us question why the artist would do such a thing.

In recording its destruction, the meaning and the value of the urn is changed — it is no longer an ancient and precious object of fired clay, but one that is the subject of a photograph. Without documenting these performances, very few people would know of their existence and they would not be able to be experienced again, without the photographs. This important relationship — between performance art and the photographic documentation of the performance — shows that the boundaries between art disciplines are blurred in contemporary art.



- How is Ai Weiwei commenting on changing values in society?
- In the other works in this gallery space, what types of activities are some artists performing? What props are they using?

#### Research activity:

Investigate the art practice of Ai Weiwei. The artist was recently imprisoned in China.

- Why was Ai Weiwei imprisoned?
- What kinds of art does he make?

## SCULPTURE IN SERIES

Minimalism in art involves the creation of objects where the form is sculptural. These art works are often produced as a series of objects and appear as if they have been made by machines, rather than by the artist's hand.



### RACHEL WHITEREAD

*Twenty-five spaces* 1995  
Art work location: Gallery 1.1, GOMA

Since casting her first sculptures in the late 1980s, Rachel Whiteread has employed a range of different materials including plaster, concrete and rubber in her art practice. In *Twenty-five spaces* 1995, the artist has cast the spaces underneath 25 school chairs in a transparent resin.

The grid-like arrangement of the blocks refers to minimalist sculpture, but also reflects the layout of a school classroom. The spaces between the blocks invite viewers to move around them — audiences are able to experience the work from many different angles.

This sculpture recalls what classrooms used to look like. *Can you imagine what a sculpture would look like using the chairs in your own classroom?*

- Look at this work and think about repetition and pattern. Why would an artist create a series of objects?
- Why is the artist drawing our attention to a space we do not usually notice?

## CONTEMPORARY SCULPTURE

Contemporary sculpture often takes unexpected forms which cause viewers to stop and think about what they are seeing.



### PATRICIA PICCININI

*The stags* 2008

Art work location: Gallery 1.1, GOMA

Patricia Piccinini has a keen interest in cars, particularly customised vehicles, and this is expressed in her art.

*The stags* 2008 depicts two motor scooters as living animals — nature and technology have combined. This sculpture refers to customised Vespas, often decorated with multiple mirrors, which were ridden by the Mods in the 1960s. Like customised vehicles, these scooters have taken on individual identities and are no longer factory-made 'clones'. They appear to be alive. As Piccinini has said: 'the point of crafting another life is so that you can talk about this one'. Piccinini's art works question what might be the result when humanity and technology become ever more entwined.

- Artists today are using all sorts of new materials to create their sculptures. *Can you tell which of Piccinini's materials have come from car manufacturing?*
- *Why has the artist made a motor scooter look like an animal?*
- *What does this work suggest about our relationship with nature and with machines, now and in the future?*
- This sculpture is a little bit cheeky — it's almost as if the animal/scooter is talking to the viewer. *What would you call this animal/scooter? What do you think this creation would say to its audience?*

## INSTALLATION ART

Installation art relates to the space in which it is exhibited, and focuses attention on the viewer's experience of the work in that space.



### MICHAEL SAILSTORFER

*Wolken (Clouds)* 2010

Art work location: Gallery 1.2, GOMA

Michael Sailstorfer's *Wolken (Clouds)* 2010 brings together a huge number of black inner tubes (normally used for truck tyres), which are knotted together and suspended from the ceiling so as to evoke a dark and menacing cloud.

The work humorously inverts the traditional function of the artist's chosen material — the heavy tyre tubes that would normally be in movement, and in contact with the ground, have instead taken to the air where they hover and are perfectly still.

The act of collaboration is important to this work. The artist has worked with many people — including people who are skilled in exhibition installation — to realise his ambitious idea.

- There is an element of surprise to this work. *Can you describe your surprise at viewing this work and how your surprise was generated?*
- This installation takes advantage of the impressive architectural spaces of GOMA, and, for a work like this, meaning is often created as a result of the space in which the work is located. *Can you name other works in this exhibition where location seems to be important for the meaning of the work?*

## RITUAL OBJECTS AND SPIRITUALITY

Ritual objects are objects that hold deep, and often spiritual, meaning for people.



### JOE NGALLAMETTA

*Thap yongk (Law poles) 2002–03*  
Art work location: Gallery 1.3, GOMA

Representing an upturned tree, Joe Ngallametta's *Thap yongk (law poles)* suggest branches hidden beneath the earth with the roots at the top of the poles, or trunks. The poles draw the spirit back to the ground, the 'hidden' branches symbolising the network of stories and laws connecting Indigenous people to the land and to each other.

- How would your thinking about this work change if you described it as:
  - (a) firstly, a sacred object?
  - (b) secondly, a sculpture?

(c) Many artists' works that are featured in this gallery space use symbolism to tell their stories. *Can you find hidden references or meanings in any of these works? How do these works use colour, form and traditional iconography and practices?*

- Looking around the gallery space, can you see examples of how artists from different cultures express ideas of spirituality? Choose a work by an artist from one of the following countries — Australia, China, India, Thailand or Malaysia — and describe how the work could fit a theme of 'ritual objects and spirituality'.

## Art work captions

### Page 2

**Michael Parekowhai**  
New Zealand b.1968  
*The Horn of Africa* 2006  
Automotive paint, wood, fibreglass, steel, brass / 395 x 200 x 260cm / Purchased 2008 with funds from the Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund in recognition of the contribution to the Gallery by Wayne Goss (Chair of Trustees 1999–2008) / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist

### Page 3

**Scott Redford**  
Australia b.1962  
*The High / Perpetual Xmas, No Abstractions* 2008  
Brick, stone, steel, aluminium, 2-pack paint, acrylic, neon glass tube, fluorescent glass tube / 990 x 466 x 140cm (above ground dimensions) / This project has received financial assistance through Arts Queensland from art+place, the Queensland Government's Public Art Fund / Collection: ArtWorks Queensland / © The artist

### Page 3

**Romuald Hazoumè**  
Bénin b.1962  
*Liberté* 2009  
Plastic, porcupine quills and fabric / 50 x 43 x 25cm / Purchased 2010 with a special allocation from the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © Romuald Hazoumè/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, 2012

### Page 4

**Ai Weiwei**  
China b.1957  
*Dropping a Han dynasty urn* 1995  
Gelatin silver photograph on paper, AP / Three sheets: 180 x 169.5cm (each) / Purchased 2006. The Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist

### Page 4

**Rachel Whiteread**  
England b.1963  
*Twenty-five spaces* 1995  
Cast resin / 25 blocks: 43 x 30 x 30cm (irreg., each) / Purchased 1996. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist

### Page 5

**Patricia Piccinini**  
Australia b.1965  
*The stags* 2008  
Fibreglass, automotive paint, leather, steel, plastic, tyres, ed.1/3 / Two pieces: 177 x 183 x 102cm and 147 x 90 x 101cm; 196 x 224 x 167cm (installed, variable) / Purchased 2009 with funds from the Estate of Lawrence F King in memory of the late Mr and Mrs SW King through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation and the Queensland Government's Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist

### Page 5

**Michael Sailstorfer**  
Germany b.1979  
*Wolken (Clouds)* 2010  
Tyre inner tubes / Installed size variable / Purchased 2011 with funds from Tim Fairfax, AM, through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © Michael Sailstorfer, 2010/VG Bild-Kunst. Licensed by Viscopy, 2012

### Page 6

**Joe Ngallametta**  
Kugu Muminh/Kugu Uwanh people  
Australia 1945–2005  
*Thap yongk (Law poles)* 2002–03  
Carved milkwood (*Alstonia muellerana*) with synthetic polymer paint and natural pigments / 15 components: 250 x 250cm (installed, approx.) / Commissioned 2002 with funds from the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery / © The artist

These curriculum documents were consulted to create this education resource:

- Assessment and Reporting Framework for The Arts, focusing on learning and assessment around the Essential Learnings and Standards for Visual Art, English, Studies of Society and the Environment. © The State of Queensland, Queensland Studies Authority, 2007
- Year 10 Guidelines: The Arts Learning Area. First edition released January 2009. © The State of Queensland, Queensland Studies Authority, 2009
- Senior Syllabus – Visual Art and Modern History. © The State of Queensland, Queensland Studies Authority, 2007

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