

# **KEN + JULIA YONETANI**

## **THE LAST SUPPER**

**EDUCATION KIT**  
**YEARS 7 - 12**



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## THE EXHIBITION

*The Last Supper* is a new sculptural installation by Ken + Julia Yonetani whose diverse practice encompasses sculpture and installation, video and performance. Environmental issues are central to their works which often use materials such as sugar, salt, and uranium glass that directly relate to specific environmental concerns.

Created during a four month residency at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre, *The Last Supper* is a nine metre long banquet table made entirely from more than one tonne of Murray River salt. The work points to concerns arising from increasing salinity levels in Australia and unsustainable agricultural practices. In the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster, the massive banquet of luxurious foodstuffs also becomes a larger visualisation of the problems of food security and safety in an increasingly toxic world.

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## THE ARTISTS

Ken + Julia Yonetani are collaborative contemporary artists. Their work explores the interaction between nature, science and the spiritual realm in the contemporary age, unearthing and visualising hidden connections between people and their environment.

Ken Yonetani was born in Tokyo and after working in the Foreign Exchange Market for three years, he worked as an assistant to pottery master Toshio Kinjo. He holds an MA from The Australian National University and a PhD from Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. Amongst other solo and group exhibitions, Ken exhibited in the 2008 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art and was selected for the Australian contingent at the 53rd Venice Biennale in 2009.

Julia Yonetani was also born in Tokyo to expat parents and is an artist, researcher, writer and academic who holds a PhD from the Australian National University. She has co-exhibited with Ken and published extensively. In 2010 she held a bed-in with Ken at Federation Square Melbourne titled *Global warming is over!*

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## SALT

Salinity is a major problem for civilizations, both historically and today. Following a residency at the Murray–Darling basin in Victoria, the Yonetani's produced *Still Life: The Food Bowl* in 2011, a body of work made from salt pumped from the ground in an effort to stem the rising level of salinity caused by modern agricultural methods.

Salt has many significant connections: historically it has been used to preserve food, yet it destroys ecosystems. Salinity is also related to climate change, environmental decline and food security.

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## CURRICULUM LINKS AND SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

Teachers are encouraged to adapt this education resource for their curriculum, if outside NSW.

This education kit makes the following connections to the Visual Arts Syllabus and links to the Key Learning Areas:

### Creative/Visual Arts

- The role of the artist as social commentator
- Artist's practice: ideas and inspiration
- The relationship between artists, subject matter, art work, art gallery and audience
- The genre of still-life, historical and contemporary interpretations
- Contemporary use of media and techniques

### English

- Responding verbally to visual images
- Critical writing

### Human Society & Its Environment

- Visual arts as a reflection of contemporary culture and society
- Artworks as commentary about interconnectedness between humans, society and the environment
- Exploring environmental issues and challenges

### Visual Art Outcomes

Art Criticism and Art History Outcomes:

- Stage 4 Course: 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10
- Stage 5 Course: 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10
- Preliminary Course: P7, P8, P9
- HSC Course: H7, H8, H9



## PRE-VISIT ACTIVITIES

1. Define and discuss what is meant by art that is 'installation'.

*Installation: the arrangement of objects or paintings as a complete environment in an exhibition giving viewers the experience of being surrounded by art.<sup>1</sup>*

2. Discuss the problem of rising salinity as a result of modern agricultural methods.

3. Research the history of still-life as a genre in art. Investigate the portrayal and symbolism of salt in still-life.

4. What is the significance of the title *The Last Supper*, historically and in this exhibition?

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## QUESTIONS

### Questions Years 7 to 12

What is this artwork made of?

How has the work been made?

Name the things you see.

Write a detailed description of the artwork.

What concern for the environment is expressed in this work?

### Questions Years 9 to 12

#### Subjective Frame

Consider the title *The Last Supper*. What do you think the artists feel about our environment?

#### Structural Frame

Consider how colour, the use of material and repetition give meaning to the artists' ideas.

#### Cultural Frame

How does *The Last Supper* relate to conventions of still life? How does the use of salt give this work relevance to contemporary times?



<sup>1</sup> Robert Atkins, *Art Speak*, Abbeville press, first edition, 1990, p90

## Questions Years 11 to 12

### Structural Frame

What visual references have the artists drawn on in creating the work?

“Here salt is a metaphor for the death of the land, sacrificed in the production and consumption of what has become *The Last Supper*.” – Ken + Julia Yonetani

Discuss how salt can be read as symbolic in this artwork.

### Subjective Frame – Artist – Artwork

How is the artists’ anxiety about sustainability and food security represented in the artwork?

### Practice

What impact do you think the four month residency at Hazelhurst Regional Gallery has had on the Yonetani’s art practice? Consider the difference between this work and *Still Life: The Food Bowl*.

### Cultural Frame

What issues and world events do the artists’ reference in this work?

What relevance does *The Last Supper* have in our contemporary world?

### Postmodern Frame

Discuss how Ken + Julia Yonetani’s *The Last Supper*, 2014 places still-life into a postmodern context.

### Artist – Artwork – Audience

What strategies have Ken + Julia Yonetani used to engage the audience with this work on different levels?

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## REFERENCES

[www.kenandjuliayonetani.com](http://www.kenandjuliayonetani.com)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDk47582tjY>

Ken + Julia in Conversation, Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre produced video

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**Images:** Ken + Julia Yonetani, *The Last Supper (detail)*, 2014. Commissioned by Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre.

Photography by silversalt. Image courtesy of the artists and Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre.

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*A Hazelhurst Regional Gallery & Arts Centre commissioned project toured by Museums & Galleries of NSW.*