

people like us

education resource

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introduction

The exhibition *People Like Us* captures universal aspects of the contemporary human condition and reveals the many experimental technologies being deployed by artists as they comment on issues confronting us in the 21st century.

Curated by Felicity Fenner at UNSW Galleries, *People Like Us* brings together recent work by 12 Australian and international artists and artist groups working in film, animation, digital and interactive art.

The exhibition is underpinned by a curatorial imperative to humanise these experimental and new media technologies, ensuring that a visit to the exhibition is an accessible, engaging and enriching experience.

Finding connection with the lives and experiences of audiences throughout Australia, the exhibition will tour nationally from 2016 as part of the National Touring Initiative, managed by Museums & Galleries of NSW on behalf of National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Australia.

From the catalogue foreword by Michael Rolfe, CEO, Museums & Galleries NSW

about this resource

This resource offers a range of starting points for a discussion and exploration of new media art practices today.

As a genre of art, the evolution of new media art is first located within two fundamental frameworks: the development of technology and mass media; and an art historical context. Additional frameworks for discussing new media art in the context of technology and its impact on culture and behaviour and within this fragmentary, mediated and complex twenty-first century moment are also presented.

Pre-visit activities and discussion points are included throughout these introductory pages to help contextualise works, ideas and technological developments within the real world experiences of students as engaged with new media.

Each work in the exhibition is presented alongside biographical and related information about each artist together with a series of teaching and learning activities under the headings EXPLORE, DISCUSS, CREATE, and COMPARE & CONTRAST.

how this resource was created

This education resource was commissioned by UNSW Galleries and compiled by gallery education specialist Jo Higgins in collaboration with Bachelor of Art Education students at UNSW Art & Design. This collaboration reflects a model of socially engaged practice and inclusion that involved peer-to-peer learning amongst pre-service visual arts educators. It followed the completion of an academic course in participatory practice and working in partnership with communities.

curriculum connections

Because *People Like Us* is touring nationally, the activities and discussion points in this resource have been designed to maximise adaptability with a broad focus on both theoretical and practical elements using the activities framework of EXPLORE, DISCUSS, CREATE and COMPARE & CONTRAST.

The design of this resource is as an ideas platform suggesting prompts so that teachers, educators and interested others can build and further engage students and audiences with the exhibition and the genre of new media art more generally.

Activities have been scaffolded to enable students to understand and unpack each work, as well as develop a more sophisticated understanding of new media work. Selected activities also encourage higher order thinking skills and the application of knowledge to contextualise learning.

The activities have a broad Secondary Years 7–12 focus, although the material can be adapted for Primary and non-mainstream visitors as well as specific State-based curriculums.

people like us

*'We are entering a place where human nature remains the same, but the structures shaping it are alien.'*¹

People Like Us explores the interrelationship between art, technology and the human experience. The exhibition focuses on the capacity new media and new technologies offer humans (specifically artists) to experiment with cross-disciplinary platforms for positing ideas and interpreting information. The works here describe, with moving image, interactive digital technologies and data visualisation, sound and music, connections to our inner selves, to each other and to our environments.

In the twenty-first century we use digital technology to share information and nurture a sense of social belonging. The human brain is capable of establishing and maintaining up to 150 simultaneous friendships, a capacity enhanced 50-fold for Instagram followers and 30-fold on Facebook, which allows up to 5,000 'friends'.² We invite, accept and edit our social media correspondents on the basis of shared interests, experiences and general like-mindedness. Rather than *send* one-to-one notes into the world, today we *share* information on social media platforms with potentially thousands of people. Individual letters mailed through the postal service, and even emails sent through cyberspace, are fast becoming a thing of the past as technology allows us to expand our social reach instantly and almost infinitely. Technological advances in all facets of life have enabled us to constantly extend and re-shape our individual value systems and human networks. Reflecting and advancing our innovative use of new media, contemporary artists have in turn embraced technology more than any previous generation, as they explore evolving attitudes and articulations of the human experience.

The phrase 'people like us' has been appropriated by a range of cultural commentators, from tabloid social writers to sociologists and filmmakers, just as the relationship between humans and technology has been explored in numerous curatorial projects since the late twentieth century displacement by new media of traditional figurative art.³ In 1992 Jeffrey Deitch's *Post-Human* announced the end of figurative painting's monopoly as a narrator of the human story, declaring that 'Our new technological and sociological environment is gradually shaping a new concept of self, a new construction of what it means to be a human being'.⁴ Deitch's

1 Chatfield, T., 'How to Thrive in the Digital Age', in DeBotton, A. (ed.) (2012), *The School of Life: Volume 1*. London: Macmillan, p. 312.

2 Dunbar's number' of 150 is based on research led by Robin Dunbar, evolutionary anthropologist at Oxford University: Barrett, L., Dunbar, R. and Lycett, J. (2002), *Human Evolutionary Psychology*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

3 See, for example: Alvaraz, L. and Kolker, A. (2001, co-directors), *People Like Us: Social class in America* (Documentary TV film); and Kurtzman, A. (2012, director), *People Like Us* (Film).

4 Deitch, J. (1992), *Post-Human*. Pully/Lausanne: FAE Musée d'Art Contemporain, p. 23.



groundbreaking exhibition explored the ramifications of our physical appearance and everyday experience of the world being altered by new technologies. It noted that 'New approaches to self-realization are generally paralleled by new approaches to art', a premise shared by *People Like Us* a generation later.⁵ In the words of eminent social theorist Zygmunt Bauman, 'at no other time have the keen search for common humanity, and the practice that follows such an assumption, been as urgent and imperative as they are now'.⁶

In a globally connected twenty-first world in which people move fluidly between cultures and continents, the concept of 'people like us' is posited here, in the context of a curated exhibition of cross-disciplinary practice, as a catchall for art with humanity at its core. *People Like Us* offers a range of artists' responses to intersecting thematic strands exploring political, physical and emotional aspects of the contemporary human condition. The exhibition is bookended at the start by Joan Ross's *The Claiming of Things*, a witty post-colonial narrative that combines art history and construction noise as it animates the

British invasion of Australia; and at the end by *The Drag*, Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro's video (the artists' first foray into moving image technology) that celebrates humans' love of the petrol-fuelled motor car while also heralding its demise as we arrive at the end of the fossil fuel age. These two film-based works establish a political framework for the exhibition, exposing the negative impact of misplaced human endeavour. In Healy and Cordeiro's work, the dogged determination of the mechanic as he dismantles and rebuilds the car aptly describes two of the most self-destructive human traits of our time: even as it becomes necessary for survival, people often resist change; and a more widespread characteristic that urgently needs addressing in this era of overpopulation and environmental collapse – people like cars.

Taking its queue from Ross's *The Claiming of Things*, the first thematic strand in the exhibition explores how we claim for ourselves and occupy public spaces. It moves between cycling in the streets of Sydney (Volker Kuchelmeister and Laura Fisher), walking the laneways of Melbourne (Daniel Crooks), and posing for amateur photographers in a Mexico City public park (Michael Nyman).

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁶ Bauman, Z. (2003), *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*. Cambridge UK: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishing, p. 156.

Harnessing in their art/science research the technology of apps (computer applications) and VR (virtual reality), George Poonkhin Khut and John McGhee have each collaborated with medical researchers in different ways to create interactive data visualisations that map our physical inner selves, providing insight and a sense of control over our bodies' functions. Yuri Ancarani also takes us into the medical sphere, his movie camera moving between the inside of a human body and the clinical environment of an operating theatre as it documents an entire robotic surgical procedure.



Sound underpins the third thematic strand of the exhibition, which brings together works that explore the power of sound and music to connect people in a shared experience. Shifting the emphasis of the exhibition title to look for a moment not at people *who are* like us, but to what it is that *people like*, the sonic vibrations of cats' purring in Su-Mei Tse's audiovisual installation provides holistic healing and mindfulness.⁷ The work confirms for those who engage with it why cats have been worshipped since ancient times and are today the most searched for creature on the Internet – people like cats.

Angelica Mesiti's *Rapture* dramatically describes without sound the trance-like euphoric state of music festival fans, while the emotive resonance of voice as a vehicle of remembrance is poignantly rendered by Michael Nyman and Jason Wing in unusual compositions that dispense altogether with visual accompaniment.

The works in *People Like Us* consider not only people *who are* like us and phenomena that most people seem *to like* (cars and cats), but also the human desire *to be liked*, which is inextricably bound to achieving a sense of acceptance. For generations, music and sport are the two cultural arenas that most successfully evoke feeling and

passion on a grand scale. We worship musicians and sports stars like we once worshipped religious deities. In *The Art of Belonging* Hugh Mackay explains how sport exemplifies the human dilemma of balancing individualism with social belonging: 'One of the many reasons why team sports have such a deep hold on our psyches is that they so vividly exemplify this tension between our competitive and our cooperative natures'.⁸

The shared passions of music and sport are combined in Nyman's new symphony, commissioned by the 2014 Liverpool Biennale to mark the 25th anniversary of the Hillsborough tragedy. The people's names sung in *Memorial* are not those of celebrity players, but those of everyday sports fans who lost their lives attending a Saturday afternoon football match. They are, like other subjects of works in this exhibition, ordinary people rendered extraordinary by art – people like us.

⁷ The low frequency sound vibrations of a cat's purr assists in the healing of bones, tendons, ligaments and muscles, as well as providing pain relief. Copley, J. (2014), *Why Cats Purr: How Purring Speeds the Healing Process*, at <http://www.metaphoricalplatypus.com/articles/animals/cats/cat-psychology-behaviour-and-communication/why-cats-purr-how-purring-speeds-the-healing-process/>

⁸ Mackay, H. (2014), *The Art of Belonging*. Sydney: Pan Macmillan Australia, p. 2

considering new media art

what is new media art? some definitions

*'[...] New media art is, broadly, art that is made using electronic media technology and that displays any or all of the three behaviours of interactivity, connectivity and computability, in any combination.'*⁹

Web 2.0: the second stage of development of the Internet characterised especially by the change from static web pages to dynamic or user-generated content and the growth of social media

Historically, *new media art* is an umbrella term that has referred to any style of art produced by mechanical means since the invention of photography.¹⁰ New media art is sometimes also referred to as *time-based art*. It is generally considered to have started with development of video art in the 1970s but it's a term that has also been applied to a range of other disciplines of art since then, including:¹¹

- Biotech art
- Computer art
- Digital art
- Electronic art
- Interactive art
- Internet art
- Kinetic art
- Light art
- Multimedia art
- Performance art
- Robotic art
- Sound art
- Technological art
- Video games

In recent years, the term *new media* has taken on other, broader, non-art meanings. Chiefly, it has formed part of the lexicon surrounding **Web 2.0** and refers to all and any forms of digital communication and mass media.¹²

New media art is created amongst and in response to the many intersections of these art historical, technological, scientific and cultural developments.

⁹ Sarah Cook & Beryl Graham, *Rethinking Curating Art after New Media*, MIT Press, 2010, p. 10

¹⁰ Robert Atkins, *ArtSpeak*, 3rd edition, Abbeville Press, 2013, p. 178.

¹¹ http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/arts_mediatiqes-media_arts/art_mediatiqes-media_art-eng.php#fnb21

¹² Atkins, p. 178.

the evolution of new media art: an historical timeline

*'New media could never be understood from a strictly art-historical perspective: the history of technology and media sciences plays an equally important role in this art's formation and reception. New media art requires media literacy.'*¹³

Understanding how different technologies have become embedded in our everyday way of life is one way to interrogate our understanding of *new media art*; where we encounter it and how we respond to it. As such, an awareness of some of the technical and cultural phenomena that have preceded or encouraged the evolution of *new media art* is important.

Understanding *new media art* as part of an evolution of technologies and social behaviours encourages an understanding of its unique place in the (contemporary art) world.

The following is a general timeline of significant technological, scientific and cultural developments in relation to current understandings of *new media art*.¹⁴

Events in blue have a particular art historical relevance.

¹³ Christiane Paul (ed.), *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond*, University of California Press, 2008, p. 3.

¹⁴ Dates taken from a collection of sources including:
http://inventors.about.com/od/tstartinventions/a/Television_Time.htm
http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/arts_mediatiqes-media_arts/art_mediatiqes-media_art-eng.php#fnb16
<http://www.slideshare.net/kate.thompson.sa/introduction-to-new-media-presentation?related=1>
http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/dagu/hd_dagu.htm
<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2009/more-than-half-the-homes-in-us-have-three-or-more-tvs.html>

1400s

- Block printing is used in Europe to print books
- Metal plates are first used to print
- Johann Gutenberg begins printing the Bible. It takes him several years to complete
- The Gutenberg printing press becomes widely used in England

1600s

- The world's first weekly newspaper is published in Europe in 1605

1700s

- Jakob Le Blon invents multi-colour engraving

Early 1800s

- Iron printing presses are invented

1830s–1890s

- British mechanical engineer and mathematician Charles Babbage invents the analytical engine, a precursor to the modern day computer. Using punch cards, it is able to calculate numerical data
- Louis Daguerre invents the daguerreotype in 1838, which is an early form of photography
- Richard Hoe invents the cylinder press in 1846, which can print 8,000 sheets an hour
- In 1872 photographer Eadweard Muybridge begins experimenting with multiple cameras to capture movement on film, laying the groundwork for motion picture films
- Alexander Graham Bell invents the telephone in 1876
- Eadweard Muybridge creates the zoopraxiscope, considered the first film projector, in 1879
- By the 1890s printing presses can now print and fold 90,000 four-page papers an hour



A page from the Gutenberg Bible. Image via: <http://library.sc.edu/zellatest/bible/images/>

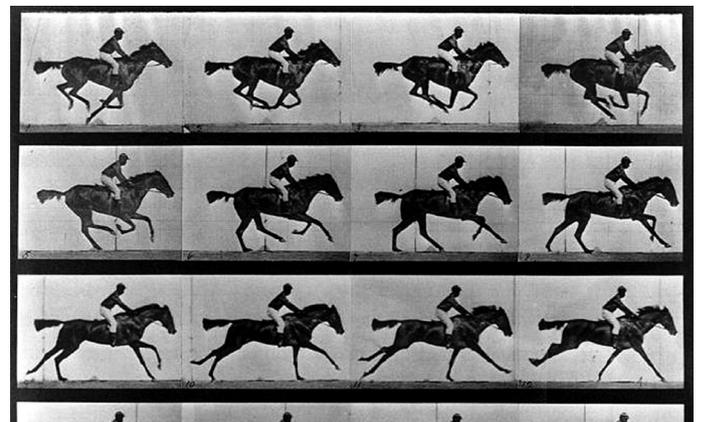


Image: Eadweard Muybridge, *The Horse in Motion*, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a45870>

1900s

- First tabloid newspaper, the *Daily Mirror*, is published in 1903 in the United Kingdom
- In 1906 Reginald Fessenden invents wireless telephony, which allows radio waves to carry signals
- Marcel Duchamp exhibits a porcelain urinal as a sculpture called *Fountain* in 1917, bringing the term **readymade** into popular use.
- In 1923 Vladimir Kosma Zworykin patents the iconoscope, the first television transmission tube
- In 1928 John Baird beams a television image from England to the USA
- In 1936 The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) debuts first television service with three hours of programming a day
- By 1948 one million homes in the USA have a television
- Colour TV is introduced in the USA in 1951
- John Cage composes his seminal work *4'33"*



A reproduction of Marcel Duchamp, *Fountain*, 1917. Image via: https://www.cassart.co.uk/blog/what_is_found_art.htm

1960s

- The Internet is first developed, although it is only available to university researchers, the military, and US Government secret services
- The release of Sony's video portapak in 1965 makes cheap video technology widely available for the first time
- In 1965 artist Nam June Paik records the Pope's motorcade in New York with a handheld camera and later screens it as art
- Newspapers use digital production processes and begin using computers for operations from 1967
- First TV transmission from the moon is watched by 600 million people on 20 July 1969



The Sony Portapak, 1967. Image via: <https://www.studyblue.com/notes/n/foundations-of-art/deck/8827391>

Readymade: an everyday object, such as a bicycle wheel or urinal in the instance of Duchamp that is selected and designated as art by the artist. In the instance of new media art, these everyday objects might include the Internet, smart phones or gaming technology.

1970s

- Nam June Paik, TV *Buddha*, 1974 (see p.17)
- In 1976, the Sydney Biennale shows video art for the first time
- Apple Computers is formed in 1976
- Cyber art festival Ars Electronica is founded in Austria in 1979

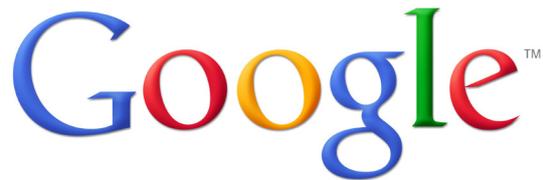
1980s

- Stelarc, *Third Hand*, 1980
- Cable television channel MTV launches in 1981
- That same year, 1981, IBM introduces its first PC (personal computer)
- In 1984 Charles Hull invents 3D printing
- Tim Berners-Lee completes the software for the World Wide Web in 1989
- In 1989 Nintendo releases its first handheld game system, the Game Boy



1990s

- The World Wide Web is launched in 1991. At the time no country had more than one Internet user per 100 people¹⁵
- Dolly the sheep, the first cloned mammal ever to be created from an adult cell, is born in 1996
- Google is founded in 1998



¹⁵ <http://royal.pingdom.com/2011/12/27/visualizing-internet-penetration-per-country-1991-2010-animation/>

2000s

- The reality TV show *Big Brother* launches in the UK and US in 2000
- Patricia Piccinini, *Game Boy Advanced*, 2002
- Facebook launches in 2004
- YouTube launches in 2005
- Twitter launches in 2006

2007

- Stelarc, *Third Ear*
- Tumblr launches
- Apple launches the first iPhone

By 2009

- There are over 114.5 million TVs in American homes. Over 50% of households have three or more televisions¹⁶
- Instagram launches in 2010
- In 2013 acclaimed British painter David Hockney exhibits drawings made on an iPad as part of a major retrospective at the Royal Academy of Art
- In 2014 American artist Richard Prince sells blown-up photographs by other people, taken from his Instagram feed

By 2014

- There are an estimated 3 billion Internet users in the world¹⁷



Stelarc, *Third Ear*, 2007. Image via: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/performance-artist-grows-third-ear-on-arm-will-connect-to-internet-and-allow-world-to-listen-in-10451597.html>

¹⁶ <http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2009/more-than-half-the-homes-in-us-have-three-or-more-tvs.html>

¹⁷ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

some art historical context for new media art

While *new media art* can take any one of a number of forms, tracing a connection through some of its art historical roots can help to identify the development of key concerns to the genre. These concerns include:

- the use of readily available, everyday materials and technologies
- an engagement with or response to popular culture and social phenomena
- a work's temporary, responsive or continuously evolving state of existence
- the role of the audience and participation in activating a work
- an interest in science and technology

Dada

Like *new media art*, the Dada movement is not restricted to a single style or form of art making. Art historian Robert Atkins goes so far as to describe it instead as a 'world view'.¹⁸ Dada, which translates to a number of nonsensical things depending on the language in which it's spoken, occurred in Western Europe and New York between 1915 to around 1923 and was a response to the horrors of World War One, the first industrialised war.

Affronted by the mass destruction brought about by recent scientific and technological developments, Dadaists including Jean Arp, Marcel Duchamp, Kurt Schwitters, Hannah Höch, Man Ray and Francis Picabia responded with anarchic, playful, intuitive and frequently absurd mixed media programs, poetry, performance, readymade sculptures and other chance-based works and interventions.¹⁹

DISCUSSION: How does the Internet help shape our worldview today? Consider the way we surf websites, look at images, read the news. How would you go about forming a world view today without using the Internet?

ACTIVITY: Use Google to create your own absurdist Dada poem. Start to ask Google some questions – How Can I... Why Do I... What If... – and see what Google has to say. Write down the first six lines. Repeat with another question.

Worldview: the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world



Image: Theo van Doesburg. Poster *Kleine Dadasoirée Haagscha K.K.* [proof]. December 1922 – 10 January 1923. Lithography. Dimensions unknown. Utrecht, Centraal Museum (inv.nr.ab4991)

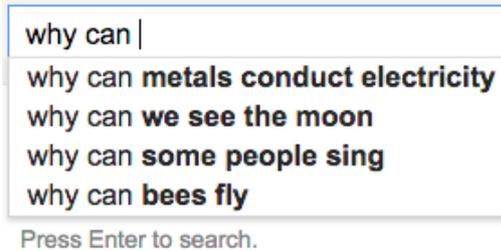


Image via: <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/chi-city-creates-a-different-kind-of-sidewalk-lane-20140922-embeddedvideo.html>

¹⁸ Robert Atkins, *ArtSpeak*, 3rd edition, Abbeville Press, 2013, p. 116.

¹⁹ Hans Richter, *dada: art and anti-art*, Thames & Hudson, 1997

Pop Art

A direct response to the mass culture of the late 1950s and 1960s, Pop Art directly embraced the visual language of its time – advertising, comic strips, branded products and an increasing mass media – to celebrate both the boom in Western post-war consumerism and the increasingly powerful, prevalent popular culture it brought with it. Like Dada, Pop was deliberately irreverent and playful. By repurposing the visual framework of cartoons and advertising, artists like Roy Lichtenstein, Andy Warhol and Richard Hamilton also took aim at the austerity of Abstract Expressionism, which had preceded it. For artists like Warhol, popularising techniques like silkscreen printing enabled him to make multiple editions of works, and he has said, ‘My fascination with letting images repeat and repeat – or in film’s case “run on” – manifests my belief that **we spend much of our lives seeing without observing**’.²⁰ This idea of bringing ordinary objects – cans of soup, tabloid photos, even hamburgers – into the spotlight and privileging them as subject matter worthy of ‘high art’ consideration was a significant moment in the development of popular culture’s wider influence on the art world.

DISCUSSION: *What do you think Andy Warhol means when he says we spend our lives seeing but not observing?*

ACTIVITY: *Collect a series of your favourite TV or print advertisements and curate an exhibition of them. Consider the subject of your exhibition: Are you arranging your ads visually or thematically? Do you look at them differently when they’re arranged as ‘high art’? Do you notice anything else about them?*

Things to consider: *the use/placement of text, the mood created by the colours, any new meanings that might come from putting one next to the other, the use of Photoshop/collage/other techniques*

Fluxus

Like Dada before it, Fluxus was a movement or means of creating art defined not by aesthetics but by social and artistic agendas. Typically mixed media, Fluxus artists created everything from poetry to guerrilla theatre and concerts to sound pieces and electronic-based works. Considered a response to the social and political upheaval of the 1960s, as well as the increasing commodification of the art world, Fluxus was driven by artists, poets and musicians including Joseph Beuys, Charlotte Moorman, Nam June Paik, Yoko Ono and Daniel Spoerri. It is often associated with Happenings, a more distinct style of art-making in the early 1960s popularised by artist Allan Kaprow, who described Happenings as an ‘assemblage of events performed or perceived in more than one time and place’ and that usually required the participation of an audience to realise its meaning.²¹

²⁰ <http://www.aktionsart.org/blog/2014/11/24/visibility>

²¹ Atkins, p. 141.



Image: 1976 version of *TV Buddha* for Kaldor Public Art Project 5 with Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Courtesy of Kaldor Public Art Projects

Video Art

When Sony released its first handheld portable camera, the Sony Portapak, in 1965, artists like the Korean-born Nam June Paik were quick to jump on the technology as a new way to create and disseminate art. Video is considered to be a medium, not a style²² and as such it has been and continues to be used in a number of different ways, from large-scale installations, to performance documentation and lo-fi screenings. Paik is credited as one of the earliest artists to use video. He reportedly had his camera with him when Pope Paul VI's motorcade passed through New York City in October 1965 causing a major traffic jam, which Paik recorded and then screened several hours later. More recently artists such as Douglas Gordon (*24 Hour Psycho*, 1993) and Christian Marclay (*The Clock*, 2010) have used or exploited video to cinematic scale, manipulating well-known images from popular culture to explore notions of time, authorship and appropriation.

DISCUSSION: Research Nam June Paik's *TV Buddha* from 1974. This sculptural installation depicts an ancient Buddha sculpture sitting in front of a television broadcasting CCTV footage of him sitting there. What do you think Paik is trying to say about our relationship to television and popular culture?

ACTIVITY: Consider the role of YouTube as a platform to show video art. Curate a channel of short films (these can be video art works, film clips, ads or other) around the theme of narcissism.

Narcissism is an overwhelming fascination with oneself. It can also be described as smugness or self-centredness.

Conceptual Art

Conceptual Art was a genre or style of art in the mid-1960s and 1970s that privileged ideas over physical objects and encouraged the idea of audience participation. Often, what was presented as a finished work was, in fact, the documentation or process of an artist's thinking or experimentation.²³ Like its 1960s counterpart Pop, Conceptual Art also had strong ties to Dada because, as art historian Robert Atkins notes, it too asked, 'What is an artwork?'²⁴ Says Atkins, 'Conceptual art's emphasis on the artist's thinking made any activity or thought a potential work of art, without the necessity of translating it into pictorial or sculptural form'. Key conceptual artists included Allan Kaprow, Joseph Beuys, Hans Haacke and Australian artist Mike Parr. Like *new media art*, Conceptual Art is now considered an umbrella term for a range of art forms including video, performance, new media and large-scale earth and installation art.

²² Atkins, p. 250

²³ Roberta Smith, 'Conceptual Art', *Concepts of Modern Art*, ed. Nikos Stangos, Thames & Hudson, 3rd edition, 2004, pp.256-270

²⁴ Atkins, p. 104.

Performance Art / Body Art

Performance Art, like *new media art*, is a broad term that encompasses a range of practices and art forms including Body Art, Fluxus, Happenings, Feminist Art, Video Art and Conceptual Art. It first appeared in the late 1960s and, using their bodies as their primary medium, was a way for artists to explore a range of interests including the physical and mental/spiritual limits of the body. Ranging from live actions or gestures to private documentation of a ritual, Performance Art consistently maintains four core elements: a concern with time; an attention to space or location; the role of the artist's body; and a relationship or engagement between audience and artist in realising the work.²⁵ Early performance pieces, by artists such as Chris Burden, Marina Abramović and Mike Parr, were often violent and long in duration.

As a pioneer of Performance Art, Belgrade-born Abramović's practice has shifted over the years from an interest in the limits of her own mind and body, to the creation of immersive, participatory experiences for members of the public that she facilitates rather than performs.²⁶



Kaldor Public Art Project 30: Marina Abramović: In Residence.
Photo: Peter Greig. Courtesy: Kaldor Public Art Project, June 2015

²⁵ https://www.moma.org/learn/moma_learning/themes/conceptual-art/performance-into-art

²⁶ <http://www.kaldorartprojects.org.au/projects?marina-abramovic>

Online Art

As the term suggests, Online Art is art that uses the Internet as its medium and is a form of art that has been around since the World Wide Web was made widely accessible in the 1990s. Online artists use the Internet as both a site for showing their work and as the medium itself, exploring interactivity, data, virtual worlds and mass communication. Artists have used everything from their own original computer codes to existing websites like YouTube and eBay to explore their ideas and present their work. Australian performance artist Stelarc is particularly interested in human-machine interfaces and the idea of the **cyborg**. His 1996 work *Ping Body* saw the artist connected to a series of robotic machines that were controlled by remote users online.

Cyborg: a fictional or hypothetical person whose physical abilities are extended beyond normal human limitations by mechanical elements built into the body

DISCUSSION: *How has the Internet changed the way we look at or understand art?*

ACTIVITY: *Use the Google Cultural Institute to research a painting by Claude Monet, Vincent Van Gogh or Rembrandt (<https://www.google.com/culturalinstitute>). Use the zoom tool to get right up close to the canvas. How does this kind of viewing experience impact the way we experience the work?*

before your visit– discussion points & activities



Photo: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/09/16/china-mobile-phone-lanes_n_5827896.html

the impact of technology on culture and behaviour

*'If culture, in the context of interactive media, becomes something we "do", it's the interface that defines how we do it and how the "doing" feels.'*²⁷

*'Today digital art – actually all art – has awareness... Pieces listen to us, they see us, they sense our presences and wait for us to inspire them, and not the other way around.'*²⁸

DISCUSSION: What would life be like without the Internet? How would it be different?

ACTIVITY: How do you behave online? How is it different to when you're offline? Make a list of all the different ways you interact with people. Note what's unique about each of these types of encounters and which are offline versus online.

When the World Wide Web launched in 1991 no country in the world had more than one Internet user per 100 people.²⁹ In 2014 there were more than three billion Internet users across the globe.³⁰

Today we rely on technology in so many matter-of-fact ways – we use email to correspond efficiently; social media sites and apps like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat to share details of our lives with our friends; and websites like Tumblr and Pinterest to collect images and information that appeal to us. We build virtual worlds and engage in virtual combats. We watch livestreams of events happening in real time on the other side of the world. We tweet celebrities, we vote for our favourite contestants on reality TV shows via text message and we watch movies on our phones while travelling on public transport.

A recent study showed that in 2014 the average Australian was spending 396 minutes per day looking at a screen (phone, TV, computer and/or tablet). In the USA, the average was 444 minutes per person per day. In Indonesia it was 540 minutes, or *nine hours*.³¹

It can be of no surprise then that artists want to engage with these technologies and behaviours as a way to better understand contemporary life.

²⁷ <http://www.davidrokeby.com/experience.html> 'The Construction of Experience: Interface as Content', 1998.

²⁸ A conversation between Lozano-Hemmer and José Luis Barrio, 2008: <http://www.slide-share.net/ememel/a-brief-history-of-new-media-art>

²⁹ <http://royal.pingdom.com/2011/12/27/visualizing-internet-penetration-per-country-1991-2010-animation/>

³⁰ <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

³¹ <http://bgr.com/2014/05/29/smartphone-computer-usage-study-chart/>

frames of reference

*'Traditional presentation spaces create exhibition models that are not particularly appropriate for new media art. The **white cube** creates a "sacred" space and a blank slate for contemplating objects. Most new media is inherently performative and contextual.'*³²

In her introduction to the book *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond*, Christiane Paul identifies *new media art* as form of art (like Conceptual Art, Fluxus and Performance Art before it) that shifts the focus from object to process. 'As an **inherently** time-based, dynamic, interactive, collaborative, customisable, and variable art form, new media art resists "objectification" and challenges traditional notions of the art object.'³³ And today it's an art form that employs increasingly sophisticated digital technologies as both the tools for creating the work and as the medium itself.

A '**white cube**' is a typical gallery space but is also considered to be an art world concept. As a gallery it is, literally, a white cube space with white, undecorated walls, artificial light and a simple floor. It is designed so that the art on display can be considered without the distractions and contexts of the 'real world' outside.

If something is **inherent** it exists in someone or something as a permanent or inseparable element.

³² Christiane Paul (ed.), *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond*, University of California Press, 2008, p. 56.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 1.

approaching new media art – literally

Because *new media art* is almost always dynamic and interactive, it frequently requires the viewer to activate the work to discover its meaning. This means you might have to push a button, plug yourself into something, type, listen, breathe in a particular way, and even pedal a bicycle.

This interactivity can often make entering a gallery space, where you are normally discouraged from touching *anything*, a strange and confronting – or exciting – experience.

The context for how we view art often impacts the way we understand it and assign value to it. When looking at *new media art* within a gallery space, consider HOW you are experiencing it.³⁴

- How is the work presented - is it on a screen? Is it sculptural? Is the room bright or dark?
- What kind of interaction is possible - can you touch it?
- What do you need to do to make it 'work'?
- Consider the soundtrack – what can you hear? How does this impact your response?
- Is it static or moving? What does it remind you of?
- How would you describe it?
- How does it make you feel?
- Does it seem familiar to you in any way? How?

DISCUSSION: Consider the different ways we look at images today – from apps on our smart phones to websites and gallery spaces. How does the way in which we view an image (scrolling through our phone, in a gallery etc.) affect our perception of its value? Does WHERE we see an image impact on our perception of it as art?

DISCUSSION: If an artwork requires the involvement of a visitor to activate its meaning, when and where does the art work exist? Is it in the artist's idea or is it at the moment of audience participation?

If no one interacts with the work, is it still an artwork?

³⁴ Lisa Slade & Sean O'Keefe, contributors to MOVE Video Art in Schools, Kaldor Public Art Projects.

talking about new media art: considering people like us

The exhibition *People Like Us* explores the interrelationship between art, technology and the human experience. The twelve artists from Australia and overseas take a range of approaches to technology, science, data, public space and human behaviour in their work. The artists and their work and some of the connecting themes across their practices – medicine and science; public space; sound – will be explored in greater depth in the following artist pages.

Some broad questions to consider though during and after your visit to the exhibition:

DISCUSSION: *What or who do you think of when you hear the term 'people like us'?*

DISCUSSION: *What do these works tell us about the human condition today? How do they do this?*

DISCUSSION: *How does interacting with a work change your experience of it?*

the artists

joan ross

(b. 1961)

Joan Ross is an interdisciplinary artist based in NSW who is well known for her video works in particular. Ross's work is found in important public and private collections throughout Australia, including the National Gallery of Australia and MCA Australia as well as several NSW and Queensland regional galleries. In 2013 her work was featured in the BBC/ABC series *The Art of Australia* with Edmund Capon and in 2009 she was a finalist in the 58th Blake Prize.

In several video works, including *The Claiming of Things*, Ross combines elements from well-known colonial history paintings with visual markers of contemporary life to address a number of current social concerns including the degradation of the landscape and Indigenous issues. Strong visual elements, including the use of neon, have become a distinctive part of Ross's style and are used throughout her work; these juxtapositions are used to raise questions about our connection (or lack of) to nature and the land. Ross's work contains a strong narrative and *The Claiming of Things* in particular is a commentary on the legacies of colonialism and the damaging consequences of modern life on both culture and the environment. Ross has said: 'I'm really interesting in history and the re-telling of history and all the lies and bias projection that history is. I think my interest in history stems from my real interest in nature. And my interest in what being civilised is.'³⁴

You can watch the film online here: <http://joanross.com.au/The-claiming-of-things>

³⁴ <http://owencraven.com/2009/07/joan-ross/>



The Claiming of Things, 2012
Digital video animation (7:36 min)

learning activities

Juxtaposition: the fact of two things being seen or placed close together with contrasting effect

Appropriation: the deliberate reworking of images and styles from earlier, well-known works of art

explore:

- a) In *The Claiming of Things*, Ross has used a work by Australian colonial painter John Glover as the backdrop for her animation. Explore the work of John Glover – how do you think the ideas presented in his work help to contextualise Ross's work?
- b) Visit Ross's website and explore some of her other works. Outline the key stylistic features and visual elements of her work, identifying any reoccurring features or traits. www.joanross.com.au

discuss:

- a) Create a list of all the themes and ideas you can identify in *The Claiming of Things*. Choose three key themes to discuss further and explain how different visual elements are used to communicate these ideas.
- b) Discuss how this work relates to some of the other themes in the exhibition *People Like Us*.

create:

- a) *The Claiming of Things* contains sound but no dialogue. Instead, strong visual elements are used to help communicate the ideas in this work. Create a narrative or script to accompany the visual story.

compare & contrast:

- a) Compare the ideas communicated by Ross and Glover. Discuss the similarities or differences between their works and approaches to the landscape.
- b) **Juxtaposition** and **appropriation** are features frequently used in Ross's work. How does this help to strengthen the ideas communicated in her work?

daniel crooks

(b. 1973)

Working across a range of new media, New Zealand-born Daniel Crooks has a diverse practice that has seen him labelled as an installation artist, screen artist, video artist, digital artist and a photographer. Crooks studied at the Auckland Institute of Technology and then the Victorian College of the Arts School of Film and TV, graduating in 1994. He has exhibited his work internationally since then and been the recipient of a number of prestigious awards, residencies and commissions. With a range of techniques at his disposal, Crooks creates beautiful digital works that manipulate our perception of reality. Using a unique technique called **time slicing**, Crooks distorts an otherwise familiar environment and creates something both mesmerising and **uncanny**.

A Garden of Parallel Paths takes the viewer on a journey that traverses the once recognisable laneways of Melbourne. By using time slicing, Crooks reconceives the viewer's perception of time and place and how we move through them. As observers of the work and the subject within the work, *A Garden of Parallel Paths* also calls to mind ideas of the gaze, the absent observer and the urban **flâneur**.

A Garden of Parallel Paths first debuted at the Adelaide Biennial in 2012, and is part of the Monash University Collection in Melbourne.



A Garden of Parallel Paths, 2012
Single-channel high definition video, 16:9, colour

Time slice is a series of videos and digital prints. Thin slices are extracted from a moving image stream and then recombined using temporal and spatial displacement.

Uncanny: strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way

According to 19th century French poet Charles Baudelaire, a **flâneur** is someone who walks the city in order to observe and experience it.

learning activities

explore:

- a) The title of an artwork is often the first piece of information a viewer receives about a work to help frame their understanding of it. What do we learn about Crooks's work from the title *A Garden of Parallel Paths* that might be helpful for an audience?
- b) Explore the technique of time slicing. How is this technique achieved, and what processes are involved?

discuss:

- a) Discuss some of the key themes and ideas communicated in *A Garden of Parallel Paths*. How does video help to communicate Crooks's ideas in ways that a still image or painting could not?
- b) Investigate the term *flâneur*. In what ways could Crooks be considered as a contemporary flâneur?

create:

- a) Having experienced Crooks's work, create your own video work inspired by a key visual or thematic element in Crooks's work. You can use any device available to you to record your footage – a digital camera or a smart phone for example. For more advanced learners and/or those with access to film editing software, you might also like to experiment with Crooks's time slicing techniques.

compare & contrast:

- a) Examine some of Crooks's other work, including *Train No. 1* 2002-13 (<https://vimeo.com/77691957>) and *Static No. 12* (seek *stillness in movement*) 2010 (<https://vimeo.com/77654682>) and compare it to works by Cubist or Futurist artists from the 20th century, for example, Umberto Boccioni's *The City Rises* (1910) or Juan Gris's *The Man in the Café* (1912). What similarities or differences do you notice?
- b) Compare *A Garden of Parallel Paths* with Michael Nyman's *The Art of Fugue*. How do they depict the different ways we observe the space around us?
- c) Compare *A Garden of Parallel Paths* with Laura Fisher and Volker Kuchelmeister's *Veloscape*. Both works 'move' through urban space but in quite different ways. How are these journeys different and how does our interaction with them as artworks affect our experience of them?

laura fisher & volker kuchelmeister

(b. 1980, 1966)

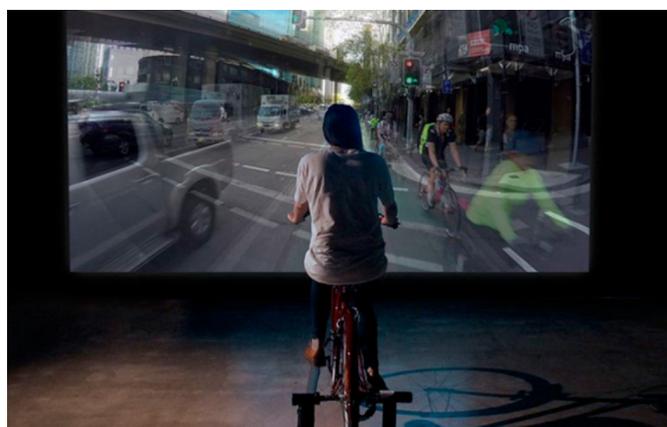
Laura Fisher is a Sydney-based sociologist and art historian at Sydney College of the Arts. She is pursuing a range of research interests around art in the public domain, and the ways the interpretation of art is shaped by social and political change. Her collaborative work *Veloscape* is a result of her exploration of the emotional and sensory dimensions of urban cycling. Fisher has recently written *Aboriginal Art: Ethics and Politics*, to be published by Anthem Press, and is collaborating on a book about the Aboriginal Art Board's program of touring Aboriginal art exhibitions.

Volker Kuchelmeister is a German-born media artist and researcher based at UNSW Art & Design. He works extensively with cinematography, interactive systems, immersive visualisation and mediation in the performing arts. Kuchelmeister has received international recognition through awards, presentations and exhibitions of his work in museums, galleries and festivals. Before moving to Australia, Kuchelmeister established the renowned Multimedia Studio at ZKM Center for Art and Media in Karlsruhe, Germany.

Biometric refers to technologies that measure and analyse human body characteristics, such as DNA, fingerprints, eye retinas and irises, voice patterns, facial patterns and hand measurements, usually for authentication purposes.

Social engagement refers to a degree of participation in a community or society.

Kinesthetic relates to the use of the sense organs in your muscles and other body parts to feel the position and movements of your body. Kinesthetic learning involves physical activity or participation instead of watching or observing.



Veloscape, 2014–15, Bicycle and interactive screen

Veloscape is a collaborative work generated by Fisher and Kuchelmeister's research and artistic experimentation. As a new media work it incorporates a range of tools that push the boundaries of traditional artistic practice. These include uniquely pioneered technologies such as **biometric** and sensor data-logging devices to create a work of **social engagement**. Driven by research, the work provides an emotional, sensory and physical experience of the ever-changing urban environment by tracking the emotional responses of cyclists as they travel through the streets of Sydney. This is done using biometric measurements as well as hands-free photography and video, in situ voice recordings, annotated maps and GIS (Geographic Information System) software. In the gallery, the experience becomes **kinesthetic** as the audience is invited to pedal a stationary bike in order to activate a unique virtual tour. As a consequence, the work bridges a unique gap between science and art.

learning activities

If something is **affective** it has the capacity to evoke or influence certain emotions or feelings.

explore:

- a) Explore the following website. Identify what you think are the key ideas or concepts behind the work *Veloscape*. <http://www.veloscape.org/about-veloscape/>
- b) Explore the argument that this work should be considered research or science as opposed to a work of art. Consider its objectives, its use of technology and the particular experience it is interested in.

discuss:

- a) Discuss your response to this work: what do you see and how do you feel riding on the bicycle? How is it similar or different to your other experiences of riding a bicycle?
- b) *Veloscape* largely relies on audience participation. Discuss the following question, providing an explanation of your position. 'If there is no audience participation, does the artwork exist?'

create:

- a) Recount your journey to school and the different ways you navigate to and from home. Document your observations and encounters and how you feel physically along the way – e.g. tired, sweaty, energetic, hot, cold, hungry, uncomfortable in your school shoes etc. Create a map that highlights your route to school, indicating these changes along the way..

compare & contrast:

- a) Compare and consider *Veloscape* and George Khut's work *BrightHearts*. Both record emotional responses to something physical. In what ways are they similar or different? Is one more **affective** than the other? Why?

michael nyman

(b. 1944)

Michael Nyman is a British-born composer, pianist, author and filmmaker whose career has spanned more than 30 years and encompassed a variety of creative projects. Nyman is known for his minimalist compositions and popular scores for films such as Jane Campion's 1993 *The Piano*. His recent work with photography and film is characterised by an exploration of unplanned everyday moments that he encounters.

Nyman has also collaborated with a number of visual artists including Mary Kelly, Bruce McLean and Kutlug Ataman and in 2008 he published nearly 2,000 of his photographs in the book *Sublime*.

In *The Art of Fugue* Nyman employs a **verité** style of filming to document a community of **voyeurs** and amateur photographers in a Mexico City square, as they direct local women to pose suggestively for their cameras. Its soaring operatic score is one of Nyman's own, *Sonetti Lussuriosi* (2007), which is based on the erotic sixteenth century poems of Italian Pietro Arentino.

Symphony No. 11: Hillsborough Memorial was commissioned for the 2014 Liverpool Biennial and was Nyman's unique reflection on the tragedy of the 1989 football disaster where 96 Liverpool Football Club fans were crushed to death at Hillsborough. It was performed twice only in the Liverpool Cathedral on 5 July 2014.



The Art of Fugue, 2015
Single-channel video, 14 min

Verité is a genre of filmmaking and television that emphasises realism and naturalism.

A **voyeur** is someone who enjoys watching others

learning activities for the art of fugue

The **Protagonist** is the leading character, hero or heroine in a story.

explore:

- a) An artwork often tells a story. Think of the characters depicted in Michael Nyman's work *The Art of Fugue* – the models, the photographers and the artist. Who do you think is the **protagonist**? Do you think one character is more important than the other?

discuss:

- a) Discuss the relationship between the photographers and women in this work. While we cannot hear the conversations between them, what do their expressions and body language tell us about what is happening in this public space?
- b) Discuss the role of the observer and the observed in this work.
- c) What effect does the soundtrack have on our impression of the film and the activities of the photographers and women? Would we feel different about it if there was no sound, or a contemporary pop song as the soundtrack?

create:

- a) Imagine you are a documentary photographer. Create a photographic series that documents the interactions and activities of a group of your friends or classmates in a public space. This might be the school playground, a shopping centre, sports ground or park. Consider the significance of the surroundings to your subjects and how each environment affects their behaviour.

compare & contrast:

- a) How do you think the stills taken by the photographers would differ to Nyman's film footage in terms of capturing the essence of the moment? What does perspective, motion and sound offer that a still photograph can't?

learning activities for symphony no. 11: hillsborough memorial

explore:

- a) What does it mean to memorialise something or someone? How and why do we preserve and commemorate particular memories?

discuss:

- a) Sculpture is commonly used to create a memorial to a person or an event but Michael Nyman has chosen to use song here. Discuss the effect of Nyman's decision to use sound instead of a physical material.

create:

- a) Create an artwork that engages with the senses other than sight (e.g. sound, smell, touch) that commemorates or remembers a positive memory or event.

compare & contrast:

- a) Compare Nyman's *Symphony No. 11: Hillsborough Memorial* to the permanent Hillsborough Memorial in Liverpool. How does Nyman challenge conventional forms of memorials?

angelica mesiti

(b. 1976)

Angelica Mesiti divides her time between Sydney and Paris and exhibits widely in both Australia and abroad. A video, performance and installation artist, Mesiti's cinematic video works use 'performance languages'³⁵ such as traditional music, dance, narrative and oral story telling traditions to explore and respond to 'the particularities of a given location, its history, environment and communities'.³⁶

Works such as *Rapture (silent anthem)* and *The Calling* explore the communicative and expressive value of sound (even in its absence) as experienced by different cultures both traditionally and in the present day. Mesiti's was the first video to win the Blake Prize in 2009 for *Rapture*, and has since gone on to receive the prestigious Anne Landa Award for New Media and Video Art in 2013. Mesiti was a founding member of the artist-run Gallery Imperial Slacks and is also part of the collaborative group The Kingpins.



Rapture (silent anthem), 2009 High definition video, silent, 10 min

³⁵ <http://scanlines.net/person/angelica-mesiti>

³⁶ *ibid.*

learning activities for rapture (silent anthem) 2009

explore:

- a) Research the development of slow motion in film. What are some of the situations in which it is commonly used and to what effect? What effect does slow motion have in *Rapture (silent anthem)*? What do you notice that you might not otherwise?

discuss:

- a) Discuss how *Rapture (silent anthem)* investigates ideas and issues surrounding worship and spirituality.
- b) What affect does the silence have? Would the work be as effective if Mesiti had kept the original sound or imposed a soundtrack over the video?
- c) Consider some of the terms and ideas explored in Mesiti's work – rapture, anthem, ritual, idols, worship – and discuss how we use or understand them in our everyday lives.

create:

- a) Rituals come in many forms, some of which we enact every day. Create a short video piece that explores how people experience concerts or other organised events – such as gallery visits, sporting matches or festivals – as a type of ritual.

compare & contrast:

- a) Compare Mesiti's *Rapture (silent anthem)* to images/videos of people experiencing altered states through prayer or meditation. How are these experiences similar?

jason wing

(b. 1977)

Jason Wing is a Chinese-Aboriginal multi-media artist working predominantly with photo-media, installation and painting but his career began as a street artist. Wing's works explore his Chinese and Aboriginal heritage and the ongoing challenges that impact his wider community, in particular our collective understanding of history and the current socio-political reality for migrant and Indigenous Australians.

In his soundscape *Syrinx*, Wing merges native Australian birdsong with Indigenous language to explore both the Aboriginal connection towards Country but also a devastating moment in Aboriginal history when children were taken from their families and incarcerated. Parents mimicked the sounds of the birds to disguise their furious grief and plaintive calls to their children from the other side of the fences.

In 2012 Wing won the Parliament of NSW Aboriginal Art Prize with his sculpture *Australia was Stolen by Armed Robbery*, a bronze bust of Captain Cook wearing a black balaclava. Wing's work is held in both national and international collections, with his public art piece *Between Two Worlds* installed permanently in Sydney's Kimber Lane in Chinatown since 2012.



Syrinx, 2015
Audio, 10 min

learning activities

explore:

- a) In *Syrinx*, Jason Wing creates a soundscape that merges native birdcalls with Indigenous language. Explore the different forms of communication used by people and in nature.

discuss:

- a) Wing's *Syrinx* uses sound to explore a particular moment in history. How do our feelings about the birdsong change when we learn about the human voices and what they are trying to say?

create:

- a) There are many ways to make noise. Have a conversation with a peer using only sounds – no spoken words – and record the audio. As a class, listen back to each 'conversation' and try and determine what each is about.

compare & contrast:

- a) Compare and contrast *Syrinx* to Angelica Mesiti's video installation *Rapture (silent anthem)*. How does the use or absence of sound and visuals in each impact the way we understand the work?

su-mei tse

(b. 1973)

Su-Mei Tse was born in Luxembourg to a British pianist mother and Chinese violinist father. She is a classically trained cellist and a mixed media artist who works across photography, sculpture, video and installation. Her work is frequently full of musical associations and notable for her use of sound and rhythm. Exhibited extensively in the USA, Europe and Asia, Tse's work is characterised by a playful sense of poetry and an appreciation for subtle gestures. Tse has described her musical interest and experiences as 'a language' in her work.³⁷

In *Son pour Insomniaques (Sound for Insomniacs)*, Tse uses the sonic vibrations of cat purrs to investigate ideas of meditation, **mindfulness** and healing with a gentle humour.

Mindfulness: a mental state achieved by focusing one's awareness in the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Mindfulness is often used as a therapeutic technique.



Son pour Insomniaques (Sound for Insomniacs), 2007
5 framed colour photographs, 2 plywood stools with MP3 players, headphones

³⁷ http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2008/08/su-mei_tse.html

learning activities

Nuance: a subtle difference in or shade of meaning, expression, or sound

An **insomniac** is someone who is regularly unable to sleep.

explore:

- a) **Nuance** is an important concept in the arts, especially in music. Explore the significance of nuance in *Son pour Insomniaques (Sound for Insomniacs)*.

discuss:

- a) Tse's work is both whimsical and meditative. Discuss how she achieves this in *Son pour Insomniaques (Sound for Insomniacs)*.
- b) How does Tse's *Son pour Insomniaques (Sound for Insomniacs)* create a meditative space for the audience? Why might this be helpful for an **insomniac**?

create:

- a) Create a two-dimensional artwork exploring rhythm and repetition and then translate it into a sound piece. Consider how to capture the unique visual qualities of your original piece using audio.

compare & contrast:

- a) Compare the different ways Tse's *Son pour Insomniaques* and George Khut's *BrightHearts* app use sound and image to alter your heart rate and breathing.

george poonkhin khut

(b. 1969)

George Poonkhin Khut is an Australian artist and academic who is currently lecturing at UNSW Art & Design and working across fields including electronic participatory art, interactive design and health. He has been working with **biofeedback** technologies for the past 12 years, creating interactive artworks that explore the human body and reframe our experiences of **embodiment**, health and presence

Khut has exhibited his works nationally and, in addition to presenting his works in gallery and museum contexts, he has also developed new audiences for interactive and participatory art projects in several hospitals, including *The Heart Library Project* at St Vincent's Public Hospital in 2009 and more recently the *BrightHearts* research project in collaboration with Dr Angie Morrow, Staff Specialist in Brain Injury at The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Kids Rehab.

BrightHearts is a biofeedback assisted iPad application that has been designed as a tool to help reduce anxiety in children undergoing painful procedures by rewarding a slower heart rate with shifting patterns of colour and calming bell sounds.



BrightHearts, 2011–15 Interactive app on iPad

Biofeedback is a method of learning to control one's bodily functions by monitoring one's own brain waves, blood pressure, degree of muscle tension etc.

Embodiment is the representation or expression of something in a physical or tangible form.

learning activities

explore:

- a) Given your understanding of *new media art*, explore how the *BrightHearts* app can be both a piece of scientific technology and work of new media art.

discuss:

- a) In smaller groups (3–5) discuss the different steps involved in realising *BrightHearts*. Where do you think the artwork exists? Is it the whole experience or the original idea? Is it when it's being used or is it the final images produced?
- b) *BrightHearts* has been discussed as a breakthrough way in helping young children relax before undergoing stressful procedures. In what other situations could the app be used?

create:

- a) In groups of two or three, develop a proposal for an 'app' that visualises an everyday physical activity – in *BrightHearts* breathing and heart rate are measured and presented. Be sure to consider the purpose and audience for your app and how people might use it. Be sure to include your research, prototype drawings and links to related information in your proposal.

compare & contrast:

- a) In 2015 George Khut was an artist-in-residence for the 30th Kaldor Public Art Project with performance artist Marina Abramović. Research this project and compare the different ways Abramović and Khut use stillness in their work to explore ideas around self-awareness.

john mcghee

(b. 1976)

Dr John McGhee is a practising 3D computer-generated image (CGI) artist, researcher and senior lecturer with a background in design and 3D computer arts research.

This virtual reality (VR) experience focuses on immersing the user in actual clinical stroke data. The imagery displayed on the Oculus Rift DK2 headset is a direct visualisation of 3D clinical Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) and Computed Tomography (CT) data. This dataset was acquired from a stroke survivor with a history of cardiovascular disease and high cholesterol. When wearing the headset, users are able to move along the arteries by means of an Xbox video game controller. They can follow the path of the red blood cells from the aorta to the site of the stroke in the carotid artery.

The artist has created visual imagery drawn from the cinematic. It is directly influenced by the feature film 'Fantastic Voyage'. The aesthetic experience uses 3D computer generated imagery (CGI) atmospherics and **augmented** components such as arterial plaque on the blood vessel walls and red blood cells. All of these visual features increase the feeling of embodiment.

Given the nature of his work, McGhee regularly collaborates with arts-led researchers, biomedical scientists, clinical imaging professionals, 3D computer visualisers and health service researchers. He is currently Deputy Director of the National Institute of Experimental Arts at UNSW and Director of the 3D Visualisation Aesthetics Lab – an interdisciplinary research lab that explores arts-led approaches to visualising medical data.



Inside–Topologies of Stroke, 2015, Virtual reality

If something is **augmented** it is made greater in size or value

learning activities

explore:

- a) John McGhee has said the following: 'There is a degree of ambiguity in what you're looking at – is it art, is it science, is it technology? Well it's all of those things. Why separate them out?'³⁸ How does this fit with your understanding of new media art?

discuss:

- a) *Inside-Topologies of Stroke* is the visual realisation of complex biomedical data. As a piece of software, it has been designed to help conversations between health professionals and patients. Discuss how you would look at it in a gallery versus in a doctor's surgery? What would you see differently? What is the same?

create:

- a) Using technology that you are familiar with, for example; emoji's, create a series of images for different medical conditions. Think about other ways you could you communicate illness or the workings of the body visually?

compare & contrast:

- a) John McGhee's *Inside-Topologies of Stroke* and Laura Fisher & Volker Kuchelmeister's *Veloscape* both involve a form of physical journey. What else do they have in common?

yuri ancarani

(b. 1972)

Yuri Ancarani is an Italian visual artist, director and lecturer in cinema, video art and contemporary art who currently lives and works in Milan. He has shown his video art in festivals and exhibitions throughout Europe and received numerous awards including *Best Documentary Film*, New Horizons IFF, Wroclaw, Poland, and the Short Film Grand Prize at the 10th International Independent Film Festival in Lisbon.

Da Vinci was featured in *The Encyclopedic Palace*, the 55th International Venice Biennale in 2013. It is the final film in a **trilogy** that explores "the interdependent relationship between man and machine and the beautiful choreography of labour."³⁹

Ancarani's first film, *Il Capo* (2010), captures the rock cutters at work in the famous Carrara marble quarry in northern Italy, where Michelangelo sourced the marble for his famous sculpture *David*. *Piattaforma Luna* (2011) documents the daily routines of the scuba divers on board a submarine deep below sea level.

Exploring ideas of technology, documentary, choreography and man's relationship to machinery, *Da Vinci* takes viewers inside the operating theatre and then inside the human body as a piece of machinery called *Da Vinci* is guided by a surgeon to undertake the delicate medical operation.



Da Vinci, 2012 Single channel video with sound

A **trilogy** is a group of three related things, such as novels, plays or films

³⁹ <http://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2014/hammer-projects-yuri-ancarani/>

learning activities

Renaissance: the activity, spirit, or time of the great revival of art, literature and learning in Europe beginning in the 14th century and extending to the 17th century, marking the transition from the medieval to the modern world.

If something is **affective** it has the capacity to evoke or influence certain emotions or feelings.

explore:

- a) The title of an artwork is a way of providing insightful information. *Da Vinci* is the name of the medical machine but what other connections do you think Ancarani is trying to make by calling the work *Da Vinci* also?

discuss:

- a) Is *Da Vinci* cinema, fine art or documentary? Can it be all these things at once?
- b) Ancarani makes a number of direct references to the **Renaissance** in his artworks, e.g. *Da Vinci* (2012) and *Il Capo* (2010). Discuss why you think this is. What does this particular art historical framework bring to your understanding of his work?
- b) In Ancarani's work *Da Vinci* is the machine that performs surgery on a real life patient. What were some of the challenges you think Ancarani faced in making the work?

compare & contrast:

- a) Consider Leonardo da Vinci's anatomical drawings – how does Ancarani's *Da Vinci* relate? Compare *Da Vinci* and Ancarani's art making practice and understanding of themselves as artists. How are they similar?
- b) Compare Ancarani's *Da Vinci* with John McGhee's *Inside–Topologies of Stroke* and George Khut's *BrightHearts* in terms of how **affective** they are when it comes to considering the workings of your body and the main ideas of *People Like Us*?

claire healy & sean cordeiro

(b. 1971, 1974)

Australian artists Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro have worked collaboratively since 2001, best known for their large-scale installations and sculptures that reinvent everyday objects – the contents of a house, VHS tapes, bricks of Lego and Ikea furniture – to memorable effect. While often playful and gently humorous, Healy and Cordeiro’s work is nevertheless underpinned by a concern with broad social issues and their effect on everyday life – from rampant consumerism to the cost of living and the impact of human desires on our environment. *The Drag* is Healy and Cordeiro’s first moving image work. In it, our mechanic **protagonist** dismantles his beloved car on one screen, only to drag the parts onto the other screen where he faithfully and doggedly reconstructs it. As *People Like Us* curator Felicity Fenner observes in the exhibition’s accompanying catalogue, it’s a work that ‘celebrates human’s love of the petrol-fuelled motor car while also heralding its demise as we arrive at the end of the fossil fuel age... [it exposes] the negative impact of misplaced human endeavour’.

Exhibiting their work in Australia and internationally, Healy and Cordeiro have undertaken numerous residencies in many different parts of the world, most recently in Kuala Lumpur, and been the recipients of a number of prestigious prizes and grants including the Helen Lempriere Travelling Arts Scholarship in 2003, the Anne and Gordon Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship in 2006 and most recently the Kamiyama Artist in Residence 2015 in Tokushima, Japan.



The Drag, 2015. Two-screen video installation

The **Protagonist** is the leading character, hero or heroine in a story.

learning activities

Futile: incapable of producing any useful result; pointless; ineffective

Homage: something that someone does or says in order to show respect or admiration

explore:

- a) Consider earlier works by Claire Healy and Sean Cordeiro, such as *Future Remnant* (2011) and *Deceased Estate* (2004). What recurring themes or ideas about the human experience can you identify?

discuss:

- a) Are you a 'slave' to technology? How? How would your life be different without your phone/computer/tablet/the car?
- b) Why do you think the artists chose to film the car and mechanic against a stark white background? How would your understanding or response to *The Drag* alter if it had been filmed in a regular garage?

create:

- a) The actions of the mechanic in *The Drag* are ultimately **futile**. Think of your own futile exercise involving a mechanical object and create a short film about in **homage** to Healy and Cordeiro.

compare & contrast:

- a) Look at Joan Ross's *The Claiming of Things*. What are both works trying to say about human behaviour? What subject matter, forms, strategies and techniques do they each use to convey their ideas?
- b) Consider Fisher and Kuchelmeister's *Veloscape*. How would the experience be different if it was in a car and not on a bicycle? How do these two art works that explore travelling convey different sensory experiences?
- c) How is *The Drag* similar to Ancarani's *Da Vinci* if we consider the body of the car in the same way as a human body?

tumblr

people like us – tumblr project

What is Tumblr?

Tumblr is a free micro-blogging platform and social networking site. It enables users to create, share and re-blog images, videos, text, music and links from a browser, phone, desktop or email around particular particular themes, interests or ideas.

It launched in February 2007 and as at August 2015 it had over 250.4 million blogs and 118.2 billion posts. It is one of the most successful, easy-to-use blogging platforms in the world today. tumblr.com

What is the *People Like Us Project* on Tumblr?

peoplelikeusproject.tumblr.com offers students an independent opportunity to engage with the some of the concerns of the exhibition in uniquely creative and personal ways:

- By its very nature as a visually led social networking site, Tumblr directly engages with some of the key concepts of *new media art* – namely: interactivity, responsiveness and the use of modern technology to create and disseminate ideas and works.
- By creating a work of art that responds to a broad brief exploring the notion of communities, difference, self and others, students can interpret the idea of ‘people like us’ using their own distinct visual vocabulary and skills.
- By sharing their work as part of a curated, like-minded digital community, students have the opportunity to see their work situated within the broader context of the exhibition and its interests in technology and humanity.

While anyone anywhere in the world can respond and engage with the Project, it is envisioned that as the exhibition tours Australia from 2016 to 2019, the content will grow and respond according to the different communities that engage with it.

Using peoplelikeusproject.tumblr.com

There is no right or wrong way to engage with the *People Like Us Project* on Tumblr.

Students can upload photographs, text, links to videos, GIFs – anything they have created that responds to the brief.

You do not need to have a Tumblr account in order to access the Project page or submit artwork. If you do not have a Tumblr account you will be asked to verify your identity with your name and email address.

If you would like to comment on any submissions, you can do so by logging in to your Facebook or Twitter accounts via the comments itself.

Note: all of the content submitted to peoplelikeusproject.tumblr.com is post-moderated. That means it is submitted and the checked by the Exhibition Education Officer before being published on the site.

On the site you will find:

- More information about the creative brief
- Step-by-step user information
- Details about the exhibition and its touring dates

If you have any further questions about the *People Like Us Project* you can submit them directly via the site.

further research

artists

yuri ancarani

Artist - Leonardo da Vinci

Interview – Klat Magazine

<http://www.ilcapo.it/press.html>

<http://hammer.ucla.edu/exhibitions/2014/hammer-projects-yuri-ancarani/>

<http://au.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2014/september/30/how-yuri-ancarani-makes-hard-work-appear-noble/>

<https://www.festivalscope.com/film/da-vinci>

<http://www.palaisdetokyo.com/en/exhibition/yuri-ancarani-inside>

daniel crooks

<http://danielcrooks.com/>

<http://www.experimenta.org/mesh/mesh17/crooks.htm>

<http://www.dlab.com.au/timeslice/exhibition/MCA/index.html>

<http://www.annaschwartzgallery.com/works/works?artist=84>

Information on Time slicing: <http://nga.gov.au/fullscreen/06/crooks.pdf>

Information on the gaze: <https://lucian.uchicago.edu/blogs/mediatheory/keywords/gaze/>

laura fisher & volker kuchelmeister

Veloscape: <http://www.veloscape.org/about-veloscape/>

Veloscape: [a Curating Cities project](#)

claire healy & sean cordeiro

<http://www.claireandsean.com/>

http://www.roslynxley9.com.au/artists/302/Claire_Healy_and_Sean_Cordeiro/1562/

<http://www.mca.com.au/collection/exhibition/594-claire-healy-and-sean-cordeiro/>

<http://johnmcdonald.net.au/2012/claire-healy-and-sean-cordeiro/>

<http://www.australiavenicebiennale.com.au/once-removed/claire-healy-a-sean-cordeiro/>

<http://www.gbk.com.au/artists/sean-cordeiro-claire-healy/are-we-there-yet>

<http://www.artcollector.net.au/SeanCordeiroClaireHealyHomeAway>

<http://dasplatforms.com/magazines/issue-13/claire-healy-and-sean-cordeiro/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EaqHnOXxdnY>

george (poonkhin) khut

<http://georgekhut.com/research/exegesis/>

<http://georgekhut.com>

<https://vimeo.com/search?q=george+khut>

TEDxSydney - George Khut: Can Art Help Medicine?

<http://sensoriumhealth.com/project/brighthearts/>

john mcghee

UNSW National Institution for Experimental Arts – [Dr John McGhee](#)

Video – [A gamer's journey through the body](#)

[Body Image: A Fantastic Voyage of Art and Technology](#)

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/3d-trip-around-the-body-20140916-10h1sl.html>

[Body Image](#), UNSW Galleries, Sydney, 2015, curated by John McGhee & Felicity Fenner

angelica mesiti

www.angelicamesiti.com

http://www.kalimangallery.com/web_pages/artists/kingpins/kingpins_bio.htm

<http://scanlines.net/person/angelica-mesiti>

<http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/channel/clip/480/>

<http://www.ima.org.au/angelica-mesiti-rapture-silent-anthem/>

michael nyman

<http://www.michaelnyman.com/>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9574830/Michael-Nyman-I-feel-safer-in-Mexico-City-than-London.html>

<http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/the-composer-the-artist-their-work-and-the-jealousy-20110523-1f0nv.html>

<http://films4peace.com/artist/michaelnyman>

su-mei tse

http://www.gardnermuseum.org/contemporary_art/artists/su-mei_tse

<http://artasiapacific.com/Magazine/63/SuMeiTse>

http://www.shift.jp.org/en/archives/2008/08/su-mei_tse.html

<http://www.mudam.lu/en/le-musee/la-collection/details/artist/su-mei-tse/>

joan ross

www.joanross.com.au

<http://owencraven.com/2009/07/joan-ross/>

Art Collector video interview with Joan Ross discussing *The Claiming of Things* [here](#)

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/arts/review/joan-ross-bbq-this-sunday-delivers-beauty-with-bite/story-fn9n8gph-1227381461109>

jason wing

<http://www.jasonwing.net/>

<http://www.cityartsydney.com.au/artwork/in-between-two-worlds/>

<http://www.ianpotterculturaltrust.org.au/case-study-jason-wing>

Jason Wing discussing Public Art in Chinatown – <https://vimeo.com/29768219>

SBS short documentary: [Surviving – Jason Wing](#)

australian new media organisations

Australian Centre for the Moving Image – <http://www.acmi.net.au>
 Australian Network for Art and Technology – <http://www.anat.org.au>
 d/Lux/MediaArts – <http://www.dlux.org.au>
 Experimenta – <http://www.experimenta.org>
 Multimedia Arts Asia Pacific – <http://www.maap.org.au>

general reading on new media & technology

<http://blogs.walkerart.org/newmedia>
<http://www.slideshare.net/emenel/a-brief-history-of-new-media-art>
<http://www.computerhistory.org/timeline/?category=cmptr>
<http://rhizome.org/editorial/2012/dec/6/whats-really-specific-about-new-media-art-curating/>
<http://www.artinteractive.org/new-media-art/>
http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms/expositions-exhibitions/arts_mediaticques-media_arts/art_mediaticque-media_art-eng.php#fnb16 <http://www.dlux.org.au/face2face/index.htm>
<http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/news/2009/more-than-half-the-homes-in-us-have-three-or-more-tvs.html>
http://inventors.about.com/od/tstartinventions/a/Television_Time.htm
<http://royal.pingdom.com/2011/12/27/visualizing-internet-penetration-per-country-1991-2010-animation/>
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Sarah Cook & Beryl Graham, *Rethinking Curating Art after New Media*, MIT Press, 2010
 Robert Atkins, *ArtSpeak*, 3rd edition, Abbeville Press, 2013
 Christiane Paul (ed.), *New Media in the White Cube and Beyond*, University of California Press, 2008

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Film resources online at: <http://netsaustralia.org.au/whats-on/people-us/>

Filmmaker: Jon Oldmeadow

Education resource design: Boccalatte

touring exhibition

The *People Like Us* exhibition, publication and national tour is supported by National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Australia and produced by UNSW Galleries in partnership with Museums & Galleries of NSW.

People Like Us will tour to 14 venues across Australia in 2016-2019:

Gallery	State/Territory	Open date	Close date
Burnie Regional Gallery	TAS	5 February 2016	14 March 2016
Plimsoll Gallery and Contemporary Art Tasmania	TAS	4 April 2016	15 May 2016
Geelong Gallery	VIC	17 June 2016	21 August 2016
Swan Hill Regional Gallery	VIC	4 October 2016	27 November 2016
Riddoch Art Gallery	SA	9 December 2016	12 February 2017
Nautilus Arts Centre	SA	1 March 2017	7 April 2017
Bunbury Regional Art Galleries	WA	29 April 2017	25 June 2017
Geraldton Regional Art Gallery	WA	4 August 2017	1 October 2017
Araluen Art Centre	NT	10 November 2017	18 February 2018
Charles Darwin University Art Gallery	NT	2 March 2018	6 May 2018
John Mullins Memorial Art Gallery, Dogwood Crossing	QLD	28 May 2018	22 July 2018
Caboolture Regional Art Gallery	QLD	4 August 2018	22 September 2018
Moree Plains Gallery	NSW	5 October 2018	18 November 2018
Orange Regional Gallery	NSW	30 November 2018	29 January 2019

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The National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Australia is the national network committed to the delivery of best practice touring exhibitions of contemporary visual culture to remote, regional and metropolitan communities throughout Australia. The NETS Australia network comprises Artback NT, Art on the Move WA, Contemporary Art Tasmania, Country Arts SA, Museums & Galleries of NSW, Museums & Galleries Queensland, and NETS Victoria, and is supported by the Australia Council and state and territory funding bodies.

UNSW AUSTRALIA | GALLERIES



Museums & Galleries of NSW



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