



CSF EDUCATION 2023: Visual Arts Learning Guide

Castlemaine State Festival acknowledges that we meet, work and perform on Djaara Country where the traditional custodians, the Dja Dja Wurrung people, have been creating and preserving culture for tens of thousands of years. We embrace both contemporary and traditional forms of expression and celebration. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and in the spirit of reconciliation, we recognise the immense contribution Dja Dja Wurrung have made and continue to make to this country.

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Introduction

Castlemaine State Festival 2023 brings together the very best of local, national and international artists to celebrate culture in our vibrant, creative town. The CSF Education Program offers workshop incursions and performances, along with opportunities to visit the visual art exhibitions included in our program across three different venues. Local young people are creating a performance walk ('Nightwalks with Teenagers') with Canadian theatre company Mammalian Diving Reflex. Our dedicated Youth Media Team are covering Festival events with their ubiquitous flare and sense of fun, whilst learning all about camera operation, how to interview artists and audiences, and how to edit their content. Look out for the Youth Media Team on the CSF socials. The Visual Arts Program is brought to you in partnership with Castlemaine Art Museum and Buda Historic Home and Gardens. The exhibitions are free to attend, however we advise booking to ensure a good experience for your group.

About this Learning Guide

This Learning Guide is intended for use as a starting point to generate discussion and activities before, during and after a visit to Castlemaine State Festival 2023 Visual Arts Program.

The exhibitions at Castlemaine Art Museum will run after the Festival ends. David Rosetzky's exhibition goes through to 3 September, and David Frazer's finishes on 28 May, so you can come and visit again, or come and see those exhibitions after the Festival.

In this guide you will find background information for each artist, plus an in-depth interview with the artist. These interviews raise broader questions to consider, which can be used to generate discussion, research and writing tasks, and other classroom activities. The artists have also cited other artists who have influenced their practice, which can offer other avenues for research projects. These are highlighted in the text for ease of reference.

The material in this resource has been created with reference to the Australian Arts Curriculum and the VCE Art curriculum. It provides generalised information that can be adapted for different age groups of students, from Foundation to year 12.

Planning Your Visit

The Visual Arts Program is spread over three separate venues, and you will need to book your visit with each separate venue that you would like to visit. Schools will need to be responsible for their own transport. At the different venues there may be staff or volunteers available to talk to your students about the exhibition. Please enquire about this at the point of booking.

Booking details for each venue:

The Open Studios Group Exhibition

Visitor Information Centre (Market Building), 44 Mostyn Street, Castlemaine

Open every day throughout the Festival, 10am – 4pm.

Self-guided. No bookings required.

Essays on Earth (Brodie Ellis, Paul Kane and John Wolesley)

Goods Shed Arts, Castlemaine Goods Shed, South Entrance, 18-21 Kennedy Street, Castlemaine

Open: Sat 1 April 12pm-4pm, and Monday 3 April – Friday 7 April, 12pm-4pm (final week of term 1)

Bookings: kate@castlemainefestival.com.au

M: 0431 998 707

Air to Atmosphere (David Rosetzky)

Stoneman and Benefactors Galleries, Castlemaine Art Museum, 14 Lyttleton St., Castlemaine

Open to the public Thursday – Sunday 12pm-4pm

Available to open at other times by appointment for school groups.

Bookings: Anna Schwann or Sarah Frazer

E: info@castlemaineartmuseum.org.au

Ph: 03 5472 2292

For the Love of Song (David Frazer with Kelly, Walker, Cave, Lowe and Waits)

Sinclair Gallery, Castlemaine Art Gallery, see above for contact details

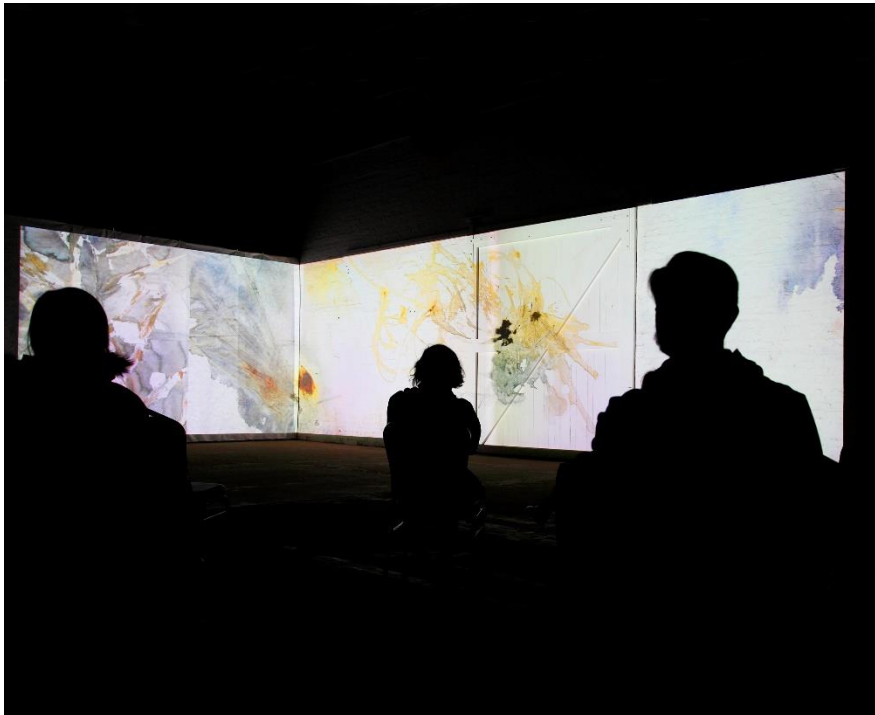
Before visiting Castlemaine State Festival Visual Arts Program it is suggested that you contact gallery staff to determine the following.

- Transport and parking options, cloakroom facilities and admission fees
- Staff availability for introductory talks and tours
- Education and Public Programs, artist talks etc. that coincide with the exhibition

Curriculum Links and Themes

The material in this Guide links primarily to Arts Learning Area of **Visual Art**. The use of film and choreography in the work of David Rosetzky, can be linked to **Dance** and **Media Arts**. This year the themes of the exhibitions are diverse, ranging from personal identity and Queer culture (David Rosetzky), nature and sustainability (Brodie Ellis), and global culture and local history (Damon Kowarsky). These themes can link to other areas of the curriculum including **Geography, Science and Civics and Citizenship**, and the Cross Curriculum Priority of **Sustainability**. Students engaging with the Castlemaine State Festival Visual Arts Program will have numerous opportunities to reinforce General Capabilities, especially **Ethical Understanding, Literacy, Creative and Critical Thinking, Intercultural Understanding and Personal and Social Ability**.

In this resource you will find multiple references to Visual Arts **materials, techniques and processes, artists professional working lives and the meaning they make with their work**. The interviews include discussion of methods of **collaboration, and independent working practices**.



Brodie Ellis, Essays on Earth, Video Installation 2022

Brodie Ellis, Paul Kane and John Wolesley: VIDEO INSTALLATION

Essays on Earth

Goods Shed Arts, 21 Kennedy St., Castlemaine

For school bookings contact kate@castlemainefestival.com.au

Open: Sat 1 April 12pm-4pm, and Monday 3 April – Friday 7 April, 12pm-4pm

About Brodie Ellis

Brodie Ellis is an Australian multidisciplinary artist, based here on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. She holds a BFA in Painting from the Victorian College of the Arts and studied Sculpture and Photography at the Canberra School of Art. From 2006-8, Brodie was the recipient of a Gertrude Studio artist residency with Gertrude Contemporary. She has held numerous solo and group exhibitions nationally and internationally. Highlights include large scale commissions for the 17th Biennale of Sydney 'The Beauty of Distance – Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age' Cockatoo Island and 'New 09' ACCA. Brodie was included in contemporary video survey exhibitions 'Videoteca' and 'Too Near Too Far' Care Of Gallery, Milan followed by institutional exhibitions: 'The Ecologies Project' Monash University Museum of Art and 'Material Place' UNSW Galleries. Ellis has recently been commissioned for a major public art work in Chengdu, China, through McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery.

About Essays on Earth

This multichannel video installation slowly unravels around the internal walls of The Goods Shed like a mountainous Japanese scroll. *Essays on Earth* uses macro photography of paintings by John Wolesley, one of Australia's most enduring artists, whose practice is focused on insects, botany, birdwatching and geology.

This is the perfect match for the experimental microscopy of Brodie Ellis, whose work investigates the ethics of how our limited natural resources are being used, and for the poetry of Paul Kane, recently honoured with the Order of Australia for services to literature.

Essays on Earth is built around Paul Kane's reading of his epic poem on the themes of earth, water, fire and air. The unfolding images use macro photography of paintings by John Wolesley filled with pond life, birds, carbon traces and geological rubbings.

Interview with Brodie

When did you first decide or realise that you wanted to be an artist? What happened to inspire you?

My dad was a film editor, and I really enjoyed watching him work and make creative decisions. It was a very mysterious process and captured my curiosity. He was also a projectionist at the local cinema, so I spent a lot of time in the projection booth watching movies and absorbing technical information about films. I decided I wanted to be an artist when I was about ten years old. I had always made things from whatever materials were around. Keeping my hands busy with nature experiments making potions and cubby houses, booby traps and imaginary worlds. My family moved from Nimbin to Sydney, back to Nimbin and then to Canberra, so the landscape and materials in my environment changed with each

move, and I often got to see things with fresh eyes. I enjoyed making traditional sculptures, paintings and drawings, but this was done in a more self-conscious, less intuitive way. I realised art was my passion very early, but I didn't know what an artist really was until I met a distant relative who was a professional artist and visited her studio. It was inspiring to see her studio as she worked across many different mediums, and I could see how she was exploring ideas in a multitude of methods through her work. I felt strongly that it was important to play and to experiment in an art studio and that ideas can be expressed in so many ways. How we play can become how we work, with practice, research and investigation.

Your work ranges across different forms including sculpture, video and photography, but it seems to be unified by a large, almost theatrical scale. What do you most love or enjoy about working on a big scale? What are the unique challenges it creates?

I love creating installations. Installations utilise multiple elements to build an atmosphere that engages complex ideas in a simplified form or experience for the audience. Audience members can engage with the artwork through their body and all of their senses. We can take in information from our environment at a deeper level by being inside an artwork. I like the way that installation art can only truly be experienced in the flesh. Like theatre, an installation cannot be summed up in one promotional image or poster and many installations come to life when we watch how others interact with the artwork in any given moment. Some of the challenges of creating on a large scale include; not being able to see how all the pieces come together until they are in the gallery/exhibition space and having large and cumbersome elements that need to be stored or carted around.

You are obviously inspired by the work of John Wolseley. What is special to you about his work? What other artists most inspire you and your practice? (Or perhaps your favourite artists?) What is special to you about their work?

I find John's work inspiring because he manages to show us how we are connected to nature and part of a whole network of connections in a dynamic system. This is very difficult to do, and he does this by spending a lot of time camping and exploring, observing, and studying nature and finding ways to express these experiences. He is very kind to others and shares his knowledge. He is great at experimenting with materials and engaging with his environment. I have so many favourite artists, including those I went to the VCA [Victorian College of the Arts] with, and teachers, who all have special and unique ways of making their work. Some Australian artists I admire right now are; **Michaela Gleave, Susan Jacobs, Nick Mangan, Cameron Robbins and James Geurts.**

The poet Paul Kane is also named as a collaborator on this project. Can you describe how the collaborative process happened with Essays on Earth?

This project began by chance. It didn't have a clear beginning but grew out of many interactions I had with John whilst working together in his studio. John is the link to the poet Paul Kane and each of us brought something to the mix. I think this is sometimes the best type of collaboration where there is no fixed end result, and you work together to find the potential of your idea.

Your work seems to have a strong social agenda. Can you say a few words about how you think art can have an impact socially, in comparison to other form of activism?

Art can have an impact socially, like many forms of activism, by generating thought and discussion. Although I have a social conscience, my art is not didactic. It doesn't tell you what to think but invites feelings and thoughts to emerge. It is up to the viewer to interpret the work and digest the information through their own processes of engagement. Art can hold space for many viewpoints and this is something I enjoy about art as a means of expression and communication.

What advice would you give to a young person who wants to become a visual artist?

Be open minded about what art is and can be. You never know what the next art project will become...

The Fire Sermon

Here in the Drowned Lands
the black dirt is the blackest
black I know—give it
time and it's oil, to blacken
earth, air and water with fire.

In winter, without
snow cover or a crop, winds
insinuate fine
granules under windows
and doors. That's our peck of dirt.

Ironbark forests—
a world away—are fire tough,
their carbon footprint
black trunks, seared soil, and fresh green—
the Aboriginal park.

Last year we fled floods,
this year a grass fire near Clunes—
one wind shift away.
The Fire Sermon gets into
your blood: the black days ahead.

But let's not leave it
at that. Winter played possum,
then ambled off—now
we're marching towards spring—Daylight
Saving all the grace we need.

A poem by Paul Kane, 2012

Activities and questions to think about before/after visiting the exhibition

- Brodie Ellis's work for Essays on Earth is all about combining the work of different artists to create new connections and ideas. Brodie has chosen to combine visual art images, poetry and voice, and she uses film to express her feelings about the images. Can you think of other combinations of artforms that you could combine to create an installation? Where would the installation take place?
- Select your favourite artist and write a poem inspired by their artwork.
- Brodie's film takes a close up view of John Wolesley's artwork. Select a large artwork with lots of detail and look closely at all the details. Make a drawing or a painting of a tiny fragment of the whole artwork. You could look at works by Hieronymus Bosch or Bruegel or Australian artists Arthur Boyd or Brett Whitely.
- Go on a walk in nature and make some highly-detailed close up drawings or photographs of things you find in the environment. You could also contrast this by taking a walk in an urban or suburban environment and see what you can find to zoom in on.
- Research the work of the other artists in this installation, John Wolesley and Paul Kane
- Consider how Brodie has changed or added to the meaning of the poetry and artworks featured in her installation, by juxtaposing them with each other. This could a subject for a group discussion, then bring your reflections back to the class.



John Wolesley, The life of inland waters – Durabudboi river, 2015-2018; watercolour, graphite, woodcut on paper; 124 x 445 cm (detail)

David Rosetzky: VIDEO/PERFORMANCE INSTALLATION

Air to Atmosphere

Stoneman and Benefactors Galleries, Castlemaine Art Museum, 14 Lyttleton St., Castlemaine

For gallery visits contact Anna Schwann or Sarah Frazer

E: info@castlemaineartmuseum.org.au

Ph: 03 5472 2292

Open to the public Thursday – Sunday 12pm-4pm

Available to open at other times by appointment for school groups.

About David Rosetzky

David Rosetzky is an artist who is passionate about finding new ways to represent LGBTQIA+ and marginal identities through an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach to art making. Often working with practitioners from the fields of theatre, dance, and film, he creates videos, installations and photographic works that question whether our identity is informed by how others see us, or how we see ourselves.

With an extensive exhibition history both in Australia and overseas, Rosetzky has presented his work in over 30 solo exhibitions and 60 group exhibitions. His Portrait of Cate Blanchett (2008), commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, was exhibited in The Third ICP Triennial of Photography and Video at the International Centre for Photography, New York. His works are held in numerous collections including the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, National Portrait Gallery, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, and Monash Gallery of Art.

About Air to Atmosphere

David Rosetzky is collaborating with members of the LGBTQIA+ community in Central Victoria including: &So, Eden Swan, Terence Jaensch and Rhett D'Costa amongst others; to create a major exhibition at Castlemaine Art Museum (CAM). Flowing from his renowned practice in video and performance, this large collaborative and multi-disciplinary work includes photography, filmmaking, performance, publishing, music, song, and social events created with and about local artists and community members. It will explore the diversity, trauma, resilience, and pride of the LGBTQIA+ community. Presented in the Stoneman and Benefactor Galleries including live performance, and a major Terrace Projection every evening at dusk.

Interview with David

When did you first decide or realise that you wanted to be an artist? What happened to inspire you?

As a child I always loved drawing and painting, both of my parents were involved in the arts and the school I went to had a strong emphasis on play and creativity. So becoming an artist for me was something that was more of a slow, accumulative development thing rather than a particular realisation in response to a specific inspiration. That said, I do remember being inspired by seeing the Pop Art exhibition at the NGV as a teenager and also visiting the Heide Museum [of Modern Art] with my Father.

Your work ranges across different forms including sculpture, video and photography. It's unified by the continual presence of the human body. What is important about the body to you, and how it's represented? What are the unique challenges of representing the human body?

I am interested in ideas around the self and thinking about how the self is constructed in our society; is it something that is determined from within, or is it dependent on how others see us, and our relation and place in the world? Representations of the body, and portraiture made sense to me as a genre to explore these ideas across different mediums. I am also very interested in people, and their relation to their bodies, memory, movement and the contrast that exists between appearances and more emotional and psychological understandings of who we are.

What other artists most inspire you and your practice? (Or perhaps your favourite artists?) What is special to you about their work?

There are a number of artists who work with the moving image that inspire me including **Eija-Liisa Ahtila, Gillian Wearing and filmmakers Robert Altman and Agnes Varda**. And some of my favourite photographers include **Peter Hjar and Wolfgang Tillmans**. What I respond to in these artists' work is how they explore aspects of the human condition and their sensitive representation of and collaborative relationship to their subjects.

You have worked with a number of local people on this project. Can you describe the process of collaboration in this particular instance? What was it like?

The collaborative process for Air to Atmosphere was extensive and varied, as there are many people involved from the local community, some as subjects and others as creative collaborators - musicians, performers, etc. It has taken a couple years to find local participants, and my process of working with them involved audio interviews, consultation, and dialogue around their representation in the work through photography and video. Local Poet Terence Jaensch was also commissioned to write a series of sonnets responding to themes that emerged from the interviews with the local participants, and local music collective, &so - wrote a song for the video component of the work, which also drew from this material as well as from Terence's sonnets. So there was quite a lot of cross pollination happening across the collaborators and the materials they each generated. I also worked with Melbourne based choreographer Jo Lloyd who worked with the participants to create movement and dance drawn from their own personal histories and experience.

Can you explain a little about the title of the exhibition 'Air to Atmosphere'? How did you arrive at this title?

The title Air to Atmosphere was partly inspired by one of Terence Jaensch's sonnets 'Out' which had the line 'radiating out into atmosphere'. This line was then used by project collaborators, musical collective, &so in their song, so I picked up on this and came to the title 'Air to Atmosphere' - for me this refers to something intangible like a mood that's in the air, or the idea of airing something, as in letting it be

heard, and how every person's contribution impacts and effects the air and atmosphere and environment in which they live.

What advice would you give to a young person who wants to become a visual artist?

My advice or thoughts I would pass on to young people who want to become visual artists is that I think it's important to have a combination of being pragmatic and practical as well as letting yourself dream and imagine and think about how and what you want to contribute within the field, to have your voice heard, and generate conversation in the broader community. Research is also very important and being aware of art history and cultural theory as well as current developments in contemporary practice, both locally, nationally and internationally, and thinking about where you see your work in relation to these different histories and contexts.

Activities and questions to think about before/after visiting the exhibition

- In 2008 David Rosetzky was commissioned to make a portrait of Cate Blanchett for the National Portrait Gallery. Instead of doing a painting or creating a still photograph, David made a video portrait. He interviewed Cate, and they worked with choreographer Lucy Guerin to create a movement score. These elements were combined to create a portrait. David also created a video portrait of Jessica Mauboy. You can find a video of David talking about the process here: <https://www.portrait.gov.au/stories/portrait-of-cate-blanchett>
- Discuss the differences and similarities between David's video portraits and traditional portrait paintings.
- Select someone to interview – maybe it is one of your friends, or maybe someone you know outside of school, a teacher or another trusted adult. With their permission, record the interview. Consider how you could use this as a basis for an artwork. Perhaps a video, combining the words with still or moving images, or perhaps you can use the words as text, or combine the audio in a sculptural installation with made or found objects. In this way create a portrait of your subject.
- What kinds of questions will you ask your interview subject? Discuss with your teacher, the kinds of questions that will get people to reveal interesting things about themselves.
- In *Air to Atmosphere*, David Rosetzky's approach to collaboration is different to Brodie Ellis's – it's about allowing a project to unfold with input from a group of people. Create a class project about identity. Who are the people in the class or group? Do the individuals in the group have diverse identities? What is the overall identity of the class? Your project can be expressed as a film, or a performance, or a photographic installation. There are lots of things to consider. What different roles will people have in the project? How will you make decisions in a way that's fair? How will you represent everyone?



Air to Atmosphere, David Rosetsky, 2023

David Frazer with Kelly, Walker, Cave, Lowe and Waits: PRINTMAKING/BOOK MAKING/CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

For the Love of Song

Sinclair Gallery, Castlemaine Art Gallery, see above for contact details

About David Frazer

David Frazer has held over 40 solo exhibitions in Australia, London and China. He has won many art awards locally and internationally including the 1st International Print Biennial in Guanlan China, the Cossack Art Award (invited artist category), the Broken Hill Outback Art Prize, honourable mention (International Print Biennial Exhibit, Taiwan) and 6 people's choice awards. In 2019, he was the Australian Commissioner for the Ulsan International Woodcut Biennial in Korea.

He has been selected 3 times to hang in the Royal Academy of London Summer Exhibition. In 2007 the ABC produced a documentary on Frazer as part of the "Artist at Work" series. He has taught printmaking extensively here and overseas. Frazer lives and works in Castlemaine.

About For the Love of Song

Castlemaine Art Museum's beautiful heritage listed Sinclair Gallery comes alive with a passionate and unique collaboration between renowned printmaker and local artist David Frazer and some of the most iconic Australian and International songwriters of a generation: Paul Kelly (Aus); Don Walker (Aus); Nick Cave (Aus/UK); Nick Lowe (UK) and Tom Waits (USA). Two great artforms entwine: image-making and song writing – together they reach into our hearts in profound ways. Frazer's most recent collaboration with Tom Waits is a world premiere.

CAM presents Frazer's handmade books and prints, lit from the sky above. *For the Love of Song* includes handmade illustrated books, endorsed and signed by the recording artists, as well as a huge suite of linocuts, broadsheets (images from the book), and Frazer's magnificent wood blocks, works of art in themselves.

Curated by Naomi Cass, CAM Director.

Interview with David

When did you first decide or realise that you wanted to be an artist? What happened to inspire you?

I knew I wanted to do something creative, I didn't want a normal job. I would have been happy to be a rock star or an artist. I was pretty good at art as a kid and liked doing cartoons. In year 7 I met an old artist going blind and I used to go to his studio on the weekends and he'd teach me how to paint still lifes and landscapes. I loved the smell of the studio, and I really liked him. During high school I was very lucky to have some brilliant young teachers who I'm still friends with today. One art teacher, who didn't really teach me anything but who really inspired me, used to sit in the classroom painting his own paintings and listening to really cool music. One time he invited the class to come to his house and studio on a Sunday, that visit really inspired me. His house was jam packed with paintings and sculptures and musical instruments. I loved it! I knew this would be the life for me. Another teacher

who I'm still friends with got me into music, he took me and my mate to see Tom Waits in concert in 1981. Tom Waits became a big influence on me. Of course, teachers would never do these things now but when I was at school it was no big deal to be friends with teachers. I had about five influential teachers in my high school years and I'm very grateful for it.

What do you most love or enjoy about printmaking and specifically woodblock printing and book-binding? What are the unique challenges it creates?

When I went to art school after high school I did painting and a bit of sculpture. I didn't even think of doing printmaking as I'd never done it before. I discovered years later that I wasn't really into paint. I liked narrative and storytelling. After art school I discovered linocuts and started to do these at home, using a spoon to print with (rubbing the back of the paper on the inked-up block). I then did an etching course at the CAE (Council for Adult Education). I really liked the graphic nature of printmaking and it seemed to suit storytelling much better than painting. About ten years later I went back to art school to do an Honours degree in printmaking. I was lucky, I caught the tail end of an old-fashioned art department employing lots of practising printmakers doing traditional printmaking. The best thing was being introduced to wood engraving, it was a revelation and I felt like I had fallen in love. It was the closest thing I'd found to writing a song which was something I would have loved to have been able to do. Wood engraving's history is in illustrating books and newspapers, they are small and intimate and you have to get up close to them. They sit well with text, with poetry and lyrics.

Which artists most inspire you and your practice? (Or perhaps your favourite artists?) What is special to you about their work?

I love the engravings of the greatest wood engraver of all time, **Thomas Bewick**, (1753-1823). I love lots of art and artists but it's probably music that's been my greatest inspiration, particularly **Tom Waits**.

Can you talk about how you came to work with all these amazing musicians? Did you have personal contact with them? How did you go about creating images from their music?

I thought of my engravings like a song, I put them together to make books and stitched them together with a needle and thread. I wasn't really a wordsmith though. I became friends with the keyboard player in Paul Kelly's band. I got him to ask whether I could illustrate one of his songs. He agreed and off I went. These books are like an old-fashioned music video clip, I interpret and illustrate the song using wood engravings. The text is printed using old-fashioned typeset. Every page in the book is printed by me on that piece of paper, no computers or modern technology is used at all. I met Paul Kelly and Don Walker a few times and they both sang the songs I used at the book launches, which was quite a thrill. I communicated with Nick Cave and Tom Waits through agents and P.A.'s [Personal Assistants]. I had a nice email from Nick Cave after he signed the books and received his copy. We had a little communication via email for a little while after. Nick Lowe came to my exhibition and book launch recently in my London Gallery and sang the song I used which was such a highlight for me!

How do you feel about exhibiting your work at CAM? How do you think it will affect the way your work is viewed? Are there any special considerations for installing your work in this context? For example, how will your books be displayed? Will people be able to look through the pages?

It's always hard exhibiting books, you can't show everything. They unfortunately become very expensive and very precious and you really can't let people handle them unsupervised. I do have

broadsheets though that will be framed and hanging on the walls. These are all the engravings and text from the books lined up like a comic strip. There will also be some other images relevant to the books' hanging.

What advice would you give to a young person who wants to become a visual artist?

It's a tough business trying to make a living out of art but if you're serious about it you have to work hard, try to find your own voice, try different things, but end up going with your strengths, persist, persist and persist. Even then you might not succeed but it's the only way you'll have any chance. And if you don't succeed well it might lead to something else and it's never a waste of time doing Art!

Activities and questions to think about before/after visiting the exhibition

- Explore a variety of printmaking techniques. Woodblock printing is a form of 'relief' printing. What other forms a printing come into this category?
- Research how printmaking has been used in the past, to illustrate newspapers and books.
- Find a song that tells a story. It could be a contemporary song or a traditional one. Make a drawing that illustrates the story, and use the drawing as a basis for a relief print.
- Research the field of Artists Books. Many famous artists have made books, using different strategies such as printing, painting, embossing, stitching, and folding.
- Create your own artists book – perhaps everyone in your class could contribute a page.



David Frazer, Love Letter (Panels I & II) (detail), 2020, linocut, 100 x 148 cm

Damon Kowarsky: PRINTMAKING

A European Australian Connection

Buda Historic Home and Gardens, 42 Hunter St., Castlemaine

From Friday 24 March, 12pm – 4pm

For gallery visits contact at Buda on ph: 5472 1032, guided tours may attract a fee

E: Vivienne Hamilton admin@budacastlemaine.org

A visit to Buda House and Garden can be combined with a Treasure Hunt activity (see <https://budacastlemaine.org/>) or drawing activity in the Garden. If you are visiting on Friday 31 March, Damon may be available to talk to your students, as he is delivering a public artist talk at 5pm. Enquire with the staff at Buda to make arrangements.

About Damon Kowarsky

Damon Kowarsky works across drawing, printmaking and painting. He uses formal craftsmanship and precise art-making techniques to interrogate and interpret architectural exteriors and non-private spaces. Architecture and the colours of earth and sky inspire much of his work. He has worked as a scientific, courtroom, and archaeological illustrator. Damon studied printmaking at Victorian College of the Arts and Glasgow School of Art. Since graduating he has travelled extensively.

In 2007 he taught drawing and studied miniature painting at Beaconhouse National University Lahore. In 2010, 2014, and 2017 he taught printmaking at Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture Karachi.

Kowarsky exhibits regularly in Australia and abroad, including solo exhibitions in Melbourne, Hong Kong, New York, Philadelphia, Wellington, Cairo, Damascus, Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi.

In 2014 and 2017 he was artist in residence at Guanlan Original Printmaking Base. In 2015 he was part of the Bait al Zubair Museum's inaugural artist in residence program. In 2016 he completed a two-month residency in France with the support of the Alfred and Trafford Klots International Program for Artists. In 2018 Warrnambool Art Gallery undertook a substantial survey exhibition of his prints, paintings and drawings.

About A European Australian Connection

Damon was approached by Buda Historic Home and Gardens in Castlemaine to create an exhibition. He visited the house and looked around the garden, and discussed his ideas with the staff at Buda. 'A European and Australian Connection' is a result of his response to the site. The exhibition also includes artwork in the garden by Sharon Greenaway, in the form of cotton banners representing local wildflowers from the region.

Buda is a large and grand Victorian house built in 1861 by Baptist Missionary, Reverend James Smith. It was based on the Indian Bungalow style and was originally called Delhi Villa. In 1863 the house was sold to Ernest Leviny, a Hungarian businessman and metalsmith, and he moved in with his wife Bertha and their family of ten children. They renamed the house Buda, after the capital city of Hungary,

Budapest. The Levins made many alterations to the house and garden, reflecting European fashions of architecture and gardening. Ernest created intricate silverware in the high Victorian style, and after he died, his daughters, who were artist and artisans themselves, made Buda into a centre of creativity influenced by the new British Arts and Crafts movement. Buda now houses and extensive collection of decorative arts, created and collected by the Leviny family.

Throughout his working life, Damon Kowarsky has always travelled, and so he responded to the notion of the Ernest Leviny as a European in a foreign environment, bringing his heritage with him, and seeing the unfamiliar environment with fresh eyes. Damon in more detail about this in the following interview.

Interview with Damon (transcript from phone interview)

When did you first decide or realise that you wanted to be an artist? Did anything particular inspire you to make that career choice?

I initially wanted to study textile design at RMIT but in order to get into the course I had to do a preparatory or foundation course at TAFE. While I was doing that course I studied with the printmaker Bill Young, which made sense in terms of wanting to go and study textile design, but I fell in love with printmaking and decided that I shouldn't do textile design, I should study fine art. So I was intending to do one thing, and I was exposed to another. As part of the foundation course we did sculpture, and drawing, we were exposed to a lot of different techniques, and I absolutely just fell in love with printmaking and ended up with it for my whole career.

What is it about printmaking that you really love? And what drew you towards etching as opposed to other forms of printmaking?

One of the really nice things about printmaking is there's a combination of artistic practice and also technical knowledge. You have to know what you're doing in terms of craft and technique, or you don't get results. I did [learn] all the printmaking techniques, but etching is really flexible in terms of what you can do. There's a very close link between drawing and etching, and drawing sits at the heart of everything I do. An etching can very often look like a drawing and have a lot of drawn elements in it. So it was a way of bringing those two parts of my practice really close together. Also you can transport an etching, you can pop [a plate] in your backpack and go for a walk, whereas lithography stones are a bit more awkward.

Who are the artists that most inspire your practice?

People like **Durer, Rembrandt, Goya, David Hockney**. In the 20th century David Hockney is an absolute God to me! He is someone who has always drawn, he's always looked at the world, and made marks on the page which tell you something about the world. I think that's a really exciting thing to do. He swam against the tide – through the beginning of his art career [the prevailing art movements of the time] were abstract expressionism and other monstrosities, and he said no, I'm interested in figuration, I'm interested in narrative, in telling stories...and the world came back around to [his view].

What do you think is so important about figuration? I take it you're not a big fan of abstract expressionism!

All art is abstract, it's all a symbolic language representing things in the world on a piece of paper or canvas or whatever. I think the idea that a figurative or representational painting is not abstract is not true. But what figurative, narrative representational art does is tell you about the world, it tells you about people, about what they're thinking. When I look at a Rembrandt or Goya etching, I can know something about those artists, but I can also see who were the people there [in the image], what were they thinking, what were the politics, what were they eating, what was fashion design [at the time]. Whereas if you look at an abstract expressionist painting, all there is, is the movement of materials. It could be very beautiful, but there's nothing else except the materiality. Figurative or representational art can also be very beautiful, with wonderful use of amazing materials, *and* it can tell us something about the world. Art has the potential to be subversive and critical of the societies it's part of (Goya did this very keenly), and those in power don't necessarily like critique, they want just to exercise their power. 'The Field' [survey exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria] in 1968, was all abstraction, Colour Field, very cutting edge. Now what was happening in 1968? Vietnam was on fire, Hungary was on fire, Detroit was on fire [following the assassination of Martin Luther-King Jr.], students were tearing up the streets of Paris in protest against the existing structures of power. And what are the artists doing? There's a quote from Philip Guston that I quite like:

'What kind of man am I, sitting at home, reading magazines, going into a fury about everything - and then going into my studio to adjust a red to a blue'.

'The Field' was explicit in telling the artists of the time, this is what you should do, and you'll be ignored if you go against the tide. Think of how Nancy Spero and Leon Golub were ostracised for making critical work, as opposed to simply hurling paint at canvas.

On the flip side, nothing is going to change because I make a picture. Things change because people chain themselves to barricades - think of women's suffrage, the gay and civil rights movements, etc. And if you can persuade angry people to make art and put it in white cubes no one really gives a damn about anyway, then you've gone a long way towards disposing of the problem.

I make pictures because I enjoy it. Hopefully my audience does too, and if I can subtly interject something of what I am thinking into the work that's great. But it's equally likely [the audience] will entirely bring their own ideas to what they see. And there is, anyway, a huge need to try and make beautiful things.

Can you speak a little bit about the importance of travel in your practice, and how that has impacted on your work and your life?

I've been travelling since the very beginning of my art practice. When I first went travelling I was twenty years old, I took sketch books with me — I'd been at TAFE and as part of the coursework we had to keep a visual diary, and every week you had to hand it in to see how many pages you'd drawn — so very early on it was that habit forming activity of just drawing, no matter where you were, no matter what you saw, and I continued that. When you travel, you see things with a different eye to perhaps people who live there, you see your own society because you're outside it. The world is full of truly amazing things that aren't coming to visit me in Melbourne. If I want to go and see some piece of spectacular architecture or a natural formation...if I want to see the Blue Mountains I have to go to the Blue Mountains. And there's absolutely something that happens when you go to a place, you spend time there drawing, and I know a lot of people say, well you could sit at home and pull up a photo from Mr. Google, but that's someone else's view of the world, it's not my view. It's not the thing I accidentally discover when I turn a corner and look up and I see something that maybe no one's seen before, or certainly I haven't seen before, and it gives me an idea or I make a drawing. It's unique to me, it's what I experience at the time. So right from the beginning I was travelling and drawing — I

continue to travel and draw – and I come back and [the resulting artwork is] a way of sharing the experiences of these places with people back home. I think back to Marco Polo, who went overseas and brought back stories. He brought back silk and lots of other stuff, but it's the stories that have persisted. The Moroccan explorer Ibn Battuta travelled three or four times the distance of Marco Polo from North Africa to China, and he went home and he wrote stories about it. And we still have those stories. Not everyone can travel, and for people who are lucky enough to travel I think it's a really nice thing to try and share it with people.

Was the title for your exhibition at Buda, The Australian European Connecting, something that you arrived at, or was it a commission from Buda?

Vivienne Hamilton from Buda approached me about the show, and I said I'd love to come and see the building and see the gardens and make drawings so I could get a feel of the place and learn something about it. While I was there I was just so conscious of the name Buda, as in Budapest, Hungary. Ernest Leviny [who lived at Buda] was from Hungary, he came to a town that was as far away from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and all that power and wealth and opulence as you can possibly imagine, and in Castlemaine he built a kind of memory of his time in Europe. His daughters played music, made jewellery and metalwork, so it was this little outcrop of nostalgia for Europe. That high European culture he left behind, but nonetheless brought with him. I was very conscious of that, walking around the house, looking at the artefacts, the paintings, the photographs, objects and furniture. So I suggested to Vivienne that a good theme for the show would be that sense of Buda being a small part of Europe in Australia, and that I as an artist had travelled in Europe and brought back pictures of Europe to Australia, as well as pictures I've made of Australia.

The exhibition is inside the house, so it will be a different atmosphere to being in a gallery. Are there any thoughts you have about that, about how the work may be viewed or any special considerations when you're installing the work?

When I visited Buda, the first thing was to work out where artworks could go, which places were available, because obviously there's a lot of stuff in the house. Some of it can be moved and some can't. We drew a map of the place with all the available spaces. My work in etching is really suited to a domestic environment. The works are small, intimate, highly detailed. They're not going to necessarily catch your eye if you are walking into a gallery and they're 50 meters away. You need to walk up to them. One of the favourite galleries I used to work with, (they've subsequently closed), was The Joshua McClelland Print Room in an old apartment in the city. It was full of beautiful bits of Japanese and Chinese art and artefacts, and was very homely and domestic, but it had my art on the walls. The context of my art in terms of who I'm making it for and where it will eventually be displayed is in people's homes. So Buda's ideally suited for that.

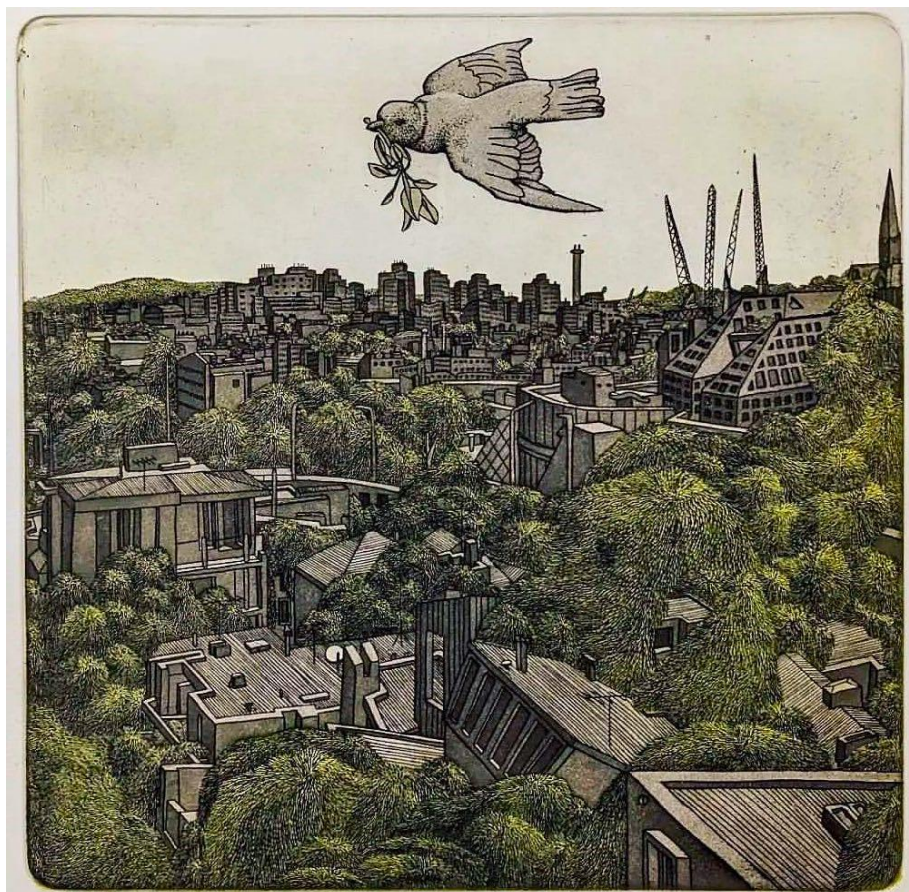
What advice would you give to a young person wanting to become a visual artist?

You have to practice. You have to work hard, you have to spend a lot of time learning your craft, and also you have to persist, you just have to keep going. At the beginning [of my career] people weren't interested in what I was doing. Galleries said come back when you're better, which was good advice. But if you keep going things eventually happen. I remember when I was at TAFE we had visiting artists who came, and one of them said it takes about 20 years to get your craft honed. At the time I was 20, and that seemed a phenomenal amount of time, but he was right. It takes an enormous amount of work just slowly building, learning, working out how to do things. If you persist, all the other much more

talented people who've stopped, will get out of the way, and you might be alright. You also have to be prepared to say look I don't want a fancy house, I don't want a fancy car, I don't want to go on holidays to Noosa three times a year – you have to decide what your priorities are. We live in a very accepting society which allows people the eccentricity of being an artist, and if it's something you're passionate about then I say go for it!

Activities and questions to think about before/after visiting the exhibition

- Explore a variety of printmaking techniques. Copperplate Etching is a form of 'Intaglio' printing. What other forms of printing come into this category? What are the different ways of incising a plate?
- Create a visual diary or journal, make a drawing in it every day for a week or a month, or more!
- Next time you go on holiday take your visual diary with you and document the things that catch your eye in this new environment.
- In his interview, Damon talked a lot about printmaking's history of documenting social and political events, telling us something about the historical moment of the event. Choose an event from contemporary times that you could illustrate with a print. For inspiration, look at Rembrandt's famous painting, *The Night Watch* (1642)



Damon Kowarsky, Naarm, etching and aquatint from two copper plates, 30 x 30 cm

This Learning Guide was assembled by Kate Stones, all interviews were conducted with Kate Stones in February 2023, via email and telephone. Artists' biographies and exhibition descriptions for David Frazer and David Rosetzky have been referenced from the Castlemaine Art Museum website.