

THE GALLERY ARK



EDUCATION RESOURCE

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National
Gallery of
Victoria

NGV Touring
Exhibition

ARTS
VICTORIA

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The Place To Be

THE GALLERY ARK

CURRICULUM RATIONALE

This resource connects the Victorian Essential Learning Standards P-10 curriculum of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development with the Discipline Based Learning: Science; the Physical, Personal and Social Learning Domain: Civics and Citizenship; and the Art Dimension: Exploring and Responding.

The resource aims to link art, science and thinking through the exploration of works of art, with a focus on animals and **interactions**, within the environment, with people and each other, to explore ethical principles in respect to animals, and to assist students to develop values systems in response to animals.

A focus on animal **inspirations** will explore works of art inspired by animals, to understand symbolism, iconography, style, possible religious and mythological narrative, the range of cultures represented over time, from ancient to modern, and the diversity of materials and techniques used in the making of works of art.

A focus on animal **interpretations** will explore works of art to construct meanings and messages, to develop and refine students' art language and visual analysis skills, and to introduce interpretive frameworks and thinking skills.

Throughout this exhibition, *The Gallery Ark*, students are encouraged to compare and contrast images and objects of the diverse animals depicted.

COVER

Jeff Koons (designer)
born United States 1955
Puppy, vase 1998
porcelain
44.6 x 27.9 x 44.8cm
Purchased, 2004
© Jeff Koons, courtesy of
Gagosian Gallery, New York



Septimus Power

born New Zealand 1877,
arrived Australia 1880s,
lived in France 1905–07,
England 1907–13,
1915–21, died 1951
The parrot house c.1925
oil on canvas
92.8 x 74.3 cm
Felton Bequest, 1928

ANIMAL INTERPRETATIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Septimus Power was born in Dunedin, New Zealand in 1877, and soon after his family migrated to Australia, settling in Melbourne. At the age of fourteen, Power ran away from home to pursue a career as an artist. He developed a passion for drawing horses and other animals. While working for a carriage painter, he painted studies of animal heads onto butcher's delivery vans, and he later worked as an assistant to a vet.

Septimus Power is more well known for his First World War paintings of horses, which he produced for the Australian War Memorial. Power was given the honorary rank of lieutenant and was an official war artist from September to December 1917, and again from August 1918 to March 1920.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Examine the composition. Is there evidence to suggest that the artist has constructed this painting from his imagination rather than painting from life?

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Can you identify the types of birds depicted in this painting?
- What is your opinion about keeping caged birds?
- The Norfolk Island parakeet, Orange-bellied parakeet, Scarlet-chested parakeet, and the Turquoise parakeet are all endangered species of Australia. Find out more about endangered birds in Australia.
- This work was purchased through the Felton Bequest in 1928 under the advice of the National Gallery of Victoria director, Bernard Hall, who was very supportive of Power's work. Find out more about Alfred Felton and his bequest to the National Gallery of Victoria.

SYMBOLISM

Birds are often a symbol of enlightenment, perspective, swiftness, vision, and prophetic knowledge.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Find Murray Griffin's linocut of the cockatoo, *The white one* 1933 and compare the style with the work of Septimus Power.



Murray Griffin
Australia 1903–1992
The white one 1933
colour linocut, ed. 6/12
20.8 x 35.5 cm (block);
33.2 x 39.7 cm (sheet)
Felton Bequest, 1934
© Courtesy of the artist's
estate

Did you know?

The parrot family includes cockatoos, lorikeets, rosellas, ringnecks and budgerigars. Illegal trapping and smuggling operations of live birds may have contributed to the decrease in Australian parrot populations, but the removal of eggs from their nests poses a bigger threat. This is because nest-robbers often destroy the birds' nesting hollow, making it unavailable for the next breeding season. It is easier to obtain and transport eggs than adult birds, and far greater numbers can be smuggled from the country and distributed overseas by this means.



Audrey Flack
born United States 1931
Parrots live forever 1978
oil and synthetic polymer
paint on canvas
211.2 x 211.2 cm
Purchased through
The Art Foundation
of Victoria with the
assistance of Esso
Australia Ltd, Fellow,
1978
© Courtesy of the artist

Did you know?

Vanitas is related to the word vanity and refers to transience. The term comes from the opening verse of Ecclesiastes in the Latin Bible (Vulgate), '*Vanitas vanitatum, omnia vanitas*' (vanity of vanities, all is vanity). What do you think this means?

ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Audrey Flack was born in New York and attended music and art school before going onto study at Cooper Union, New York in the early 1950s. She began her career as an abstract artist studying under Josef Albers (1888–1976) at Yale University, Connecticut, where she graduated in 1953.

In 1965, Flack painted her first portrait based on a photograph, imitating its colour and appearance. Her use of this technique isolated her from the art community at a time when abstract art, minimalism, conceptual art, process art and body art were considered to be avant-garde.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

List the elements of art. Why are they important in making a work of art?

Look at the surface of the painting carefully. What process do you think the artist has used to create this painting? How has the paint been applied?

Comment on the use of composition.

Comment on the use of colour, in particular the use of blue.

What evidence is there to suggest Flack has used photography as a source?

Find out more about the style of photo-realism.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in northern Europe, painters commonly created symbolic still-life paintings known as *vanitas*. Find out more about this type of painting and the symbolism associated with this tradition.
- Which objects in this painting make reference to the transient nature of life?
- Do you think the artist has taken any liberties with this tradition? How has she interpreted *vanitas* in a modern context?
- Why do you think the artist has chosen this particular title? What do you think she might be suggesting?

SYMBOLISM

Consistent through Flack's career is her emphasis on symbolism as well as the surface materiality of paint. Find out more about the symbolism in this painting.



Wu Zuoren
China 1908–1997
Pandas and bamboo
1964
album: ink on paper, 8
paintings, cardboard,
paper, silk and gold leaf
on concertina glued
binding
31.7 x 22.0 cm (image
and sheet) (each); 31.8 x
22.6 x 2.0 cm (closed);
31.8 x 45.2 x 1.0 cm
(open)
Gift of an anonymous
donor, 2007
© Estate of the artist

ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Wu Zuoren had a very distinguished academic and artistic career as a painter of both traditional Chinese painting and also western painting in oil. From 1927–31 he studied in Shanghai, Nanjing, France and Belgium and returned to China in 1935 to lecture in Nanjing. During the war he moved to Shanghai and organised the Shanghai Artists' Association. Later Wu Zuoren became professor at the Beijing Academy and one of China's leading artists.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Research other Chinese ink and brush paintings to learn more about this technique.

Describe the various techniques you think the artist may have used to manipulate the ink and brush to create the image of the panda.

Find out why the artist has included calligraphy and the red seal.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Pandas face a number of threats, including poaching by humans. Their habitats are also sporadic and populations are small and isolated from one another. What do you think could be done to assist in the conservation of the giant panda?

- Do you think there is any significance in the underlying symbolism of the panda and the traditional contemplative nature and purpose of scroll painting?

SYMBOLISM

The panda is considered a symbol of peace in China and as such was chosen as one of the mascots of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, to symbolise the aspiration for a peaceful and harmonious world.

Did you know?

There are approximately 1,600 giant pandas estimated as still living in the wild. Giant pandas are classified as bears and may consume 12–38kg of bamboo every day to meet their energy requirements.



ANIMAL INSPIRATIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Francois Pompon was born in Saulieu in Burgundy and is primarily known for his animal sculptures of the twentieth century. After his initial studies in Dijon and Paris, Pompon made his living as a sculptor's assistant and in this capacity he served many of the prominent sculptors of his day. Pompon worked for over fifteen years with Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), translating his clay figures into marble carving.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

This is a rare bronze version of Pompon's first large-scale *Polar bear*. The work was formed from an initial clay model which was then cast in plaster. The original is now in the Musée d'Orsay in Paris.

A plaster model of *Polar bear* was exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in 1922 and again in the 1925 Paris Exhibition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Research these two important events and discover why they were significant occasions.



ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Pompon modelled this sculpture in 1927. What may have made his sculpture so popular with so many people at this time?
- Why do you think the polar bear fascinated the artist?

Did you know?

Polar bears are endangered due to climate change and pollution. Their Arctic habitat is melting and they risk starvation.

Polar bears are also mercilessly killed by trophy hunters who are willing to pay large sums of money to shoot them. What other animals do you know that may be at risk from these causes?

SYMBOLISM

Generally bears are a symbol of gentle strength, dreaming, introspection, power and protection. In recent times the polar bear has become a symbol of global warming.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Find Auguste Rodin's *The crying lion* and compare it with Pompon's sculpture. Is there any evidence that Pompon was influenced by Rodin in the making of his work?

(Top)
François Pompon
France 1855–1933
Claude Valsuani, Paris
(foundry)
France 1909–1979
Polar bear
(*Ours blanc*)
(1927, cast c.1933)
bronze
24.2 x 44.3 x 11.6cm
Purchased with the
assistance of the
proceeds of the 2008
National Gallery of
Victoria Annual Dinner,
2007

(Left)
Auguste Rodin
France 1840–1917
The crying lion
(*Le lion qui pleure*)
1881
bronze
34.4 x 35.5 x 16.9 cm
(overall)
Felton Bequest, 1909



Nepal
Ganesha
 (17th century)
 copper, gold
 12.3 x 8.5 x 6.2 cm
 Presented through
 The Art Foundation of
 Victoria by Sir James
 Plimsoll, AC CBE,
 Governor, 1982

Early and impermanent images of paste and clay were replaced with those of a permanent material, describing the deity and his powers as actively as possible. Bronze images of Ganesha were also cast in southern India for use as images in temple festivals and processions.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- What is it about the properties of bronze that make it an ideal material for use in sculpture?

ANIMAL INTERPRETATIONS

HISTORICAL REFERENCE

The elephant-headed god Ganesha is the son of Shiva (one of the many gods associated with Hinduism) and his consort, the goddess Parvati, and is the chief of their dwarf attendants (the *ganas*). Also known as Vighneshvara or Vinayaka (the Remover of Obstacles), he is worshipped at the beginning of all ventures, especially starting a business or buying a vehicle. Ganesha is a popular figure in Indian art and was particularly worshipped by traders and merchants. As one of the most popular Hindu gods worshipped today, statues of Ganesha can be found in Java, Borneo, Bali, Burma, Cambodia and Thailand.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Ganesha is also referred to as the God of Good Fortune. The Hindu use of the image was first of all an aid to contemplation, a way of achieving identification with the deity.

Did you know?

There are several versions of how Ganesha came to have an elephant head. In one version, after Shiva cut off Ganesha's head in a rage, Parvati pleaded to have him revived. Shiva agreed to have his son's head replaced by the first creature to walk by – which happened to be an elephant.

SYMBOLISM

Often Ganesha is depicted standing on a rat or mouse. This is his vehicle or carrier. The rat is also capable of gnawing through obstacles, which mirrors Ganesha's ability to facilitate action.

Research the symbolism associated with Ganesha and the snake. What other important symbols can you find?



Frederick McCubbin
 Australia 1855–1917
A winter evening 1897
 oil on canvas
 120.8 x 151.2 cm
 Purchased, 1900

ANIMAL INTERPRETATIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Frederick McCubbin was born in Melbourne and the subject of his art was firmly located in the city and surrounding landscape. Throughout his life McCubbin retained close links with the National Gallery of Victoria, acting in the capacity of director on several occasions.

From 1886 until his death McCubbin was the drawing master at the NGV Gallery School where he influenced both his peers and the younger artists of his generation.

His career spanned a period of strong development in Australian art from pioneering and heroic subjects, with their focus on identity, to the height of Australian Impressionism.

After his first overseas trip in 1907, McCubbin's themes remained classically inspired, but his paintings became freer, more fluidly painted works with their exploratory bursts of colour, light and texture.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

In your analysis of the composition, what conventions or traditions has McCubbin adhered to?

Describe the use of colour.

What methods do you think McCubbin has employed to apply the paint?

What time of day and season are indicated in the painting?

What mood is suggested and evoked by the time of day and season?

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- The artist was fascinated by the work of the French artist Jules Bastien-Lepage (1848–1884). Research a work in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria by this artist, and compare and contrast the methods and intentions of both artists.

SYMBOLISM

Light has often existed in art as a metaphor for the journey of life and also the presence of God. In fact, J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851), who inspired McCubbin, was reputed to have said on his deathbed, 'God is light'.

Ducks and geese have been associated with fertility in Ancient Egypt and Pre-Columbian history. In Christian iconography ducks are symbolic of adoration and constancy, and in Korea and China, ducks and geese are seen as symbols of faithfulness and wedded bliss.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Look closely at Charles Conder's interpretation, *The farm, Richmond, New South Wales* 1888.

What are the similarities in the depiction of subject matter? What are the differences?

Compare the composition of both paintings. What do you notice?



Charles Conder
England 1868–1909,
lived in Australia
1884–90
*The farm, Richmond,
New South Wales* 1888
oil on paper on canvas
45.0 x 50.7 cm irreg.
(image); 45.4 x 51.3 cm
(canvas)
Purchased with
the assistance of a
special grant from the
Government of Victoria,
1979

Did you know?

Some of the other major artists associated with Australian Impressionism were Charles Conder (1860–1940), Arthur Streeton (1867–1943), Tom Roberts (1856–1931), Clara Southern (1860–1940), and Jane Sutherland (1853–1928).

En plein air is a French term meaning 'in the open air'. In art it is used to describe the practice of working out of doors rather than in the studio.

ANIMAL INTERACTIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

In 1886 Conder joined the Art Society of New South Wales. In the same year he left his apprenticeship as a surveyor. Conder's first sketching expedition to Richmond was documented in a small leather-bound book of watercolour sketches inscribed with his name and address, along with the date of commencement, 17 May 1887.

After meeting Tom Roberts in Sydney in autumn 1888, Conder moved to Melbourne where he made a significant impact in the art world as part of the group of artists now known as the Australian Impressionists.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Conder was introduced to the idea of painting landscape out of doors. This was largely due to the influence of Julian Ashton (1851–1942) who also painted in the Hawkesbury region, and Conder's instructor A. J. Daplyn (1844–1926) who had both trained in London and pursued studies in Paris.

Describe the light, colour and use of atmospheric effects in Conder's painting.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Identify the animals represented in the painting. Notice the broken fence. What might keep this disparate group of animals from escaping their enclosure?

SYMBOLISM

The beauty and poignancy of the fragile blossom in Conder's painting are interesting to consider. Blossom is also a favourite theme in Japanese works of art, particularly woodblock prints, and cherry blossom is Japan's national flower. The fleeting and fragile nature of their beauty suggests purity and transience. They can be seen as symbols of death and mortality. Japanese pilots during the Second World War painted blossom (*sakura*) on the side of their planes before embarking on a suicide mission.

Did you know?

Together with Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts and other painters, Conder spent the summers of 1888–89 and 1889–90, as well as many weekends, painting near Eaglemont, Heidelberg. He was affectionately nicknamed 'K' and exhibited with his friends in the *9 by 5 Impression Exhibition* held in the Buxton Galleries, Melbourne, in 1889. He left Melbourne in 1890 and travelled via London to Paris where he embraced the bohemian lifestyle and met artists like Toulouse-Lautrec.



Violet Teague
Australia 1872–1951
*Cynthia and Count
Brusiloff* (1917)
oil on canvas
201.2 x 131.8 cm
Purchased, 1954

ANIMAL INTERPRETATIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Violet Teague was born in Melbourne and was educated by a French governess and at the Presbyterian Ladies College. Later she had the opportunity to travel to Europe and studied art in Brussels and England.

When she returned to Melbourne in 1896, Teague joined evening classes at the National Gallery School studying under Bernard Hall (1859–1935), and also attended the Melbourne School of Art led by Emmanuel Phillips Fox (1865–1915).

Teague exhibited regularly at the Victorian Artists Society and, although she is most well known for her portraits of family and friends, she was an exceptional painter of animal portraits.

Did you know?

The influential French Academy organised a regular exhibition of art. By the nineteenth century, the Paris Salon exhibition was held annually and included thousands of works of art. The exhibitions generated enormous critical, public and media interest, and crowds of up to 50,000 people attended daily.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

In a letter from her great-niece Felicity Druce, it is documented that Teague painted this picture with only eight sittings of her younger cousin Cynthia posing as the page boy. Druce wrote that Count Brusiloff, the dog, 'belonged to a Miss Carrighan who duly arrived to take him for a walk every hour'.

This painting was awarded a Silver medal when it was exhibited at the Paris Salon and it eventually became the property of Cynthia before it was purchased for the National Gallery of Victoria collection in 1954.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Can you identify the type of dog in the painting? Why do you think the artist chose this breed of dog?

SYMBOLISM

Dogs have been associated with loyalty and friendship, faithfulness and guardianship, courage and vigilance.

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Teague admired the painter Thomas Gainsborough (1727–1788) and in particular his famous *Blueboy*, c.1770. Research this painting to find the stylistic similarities.

ANIMAL INSPIRATIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Jeff Koons was born in York, Pennsylvania. When he was a teenager he was invited to meet the artist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) whom he admired. Later Koons studied at the Maryland College of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago. He first gained recognition in the early 1980s, and subsequently set up a factory-like studio employing a number of assistants in a similar vein to Andy Warhol (1928–1987) and Damien Hirst (b. 1965) today.

In the 1990s Koons started to work on giant sculptures and in 1992 he was commissioned to make a piece in Kassell, Germany, which resulted in the first of a series of large-scale puppies: a 12.4 metre tall West Highland white terrier puppy made as topiary. Later this work was purchased to be installed in Bilbao, Spain, by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation and Museum.

In 1996 the giant *Puppy* was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney as part of the Festival of Sydney and to celebrate the twenty-fifth year of John Kaldor Art Projects.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Koons's work draws from art history, popular culture and kitsch. This object made from porcelain reflects Koons's recurring interest in the puppy as a subject and his earlier themes of porcelain toys. How important do you think the scale of a sculptural work is?

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Koons has often suggested that he is not interested in the question of good or bad art. He would prefer to make art which evokes a response or emotion. He believes that *Puppy* communicates happiness and makes people feel good, and that it is optimistic. What do you think about this reasoning?
- One of Koons's earlier influences was the artist Salvador Dalí. What do you think Koons might have admired about Dalí? Do you think it was his painting or his public persona? Give reasons for your answer.



Jeff Koons (designer)
born United States 1955
Puppy, vase 1998
porcelain
44.6 x 27.9 x 44.8 cm
Purchased, 2004
© Jeff Koons, courtesy
of Gagosian Gallery,
New York

Did you know?

Koons registered his giant topiary *Puppy*, 1996, with the Sydney City Council while it was on exhibition there.

John Kaldor has made a significant impact on Australian art by bringing contemporary art and artists to this country. Research John Kaldor Art Projects for further information.

SYMBOLISM

Research if there is any special symbolism attached to particular breeds of dogs.

ANIMAL INTERPRETATIONS

BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

Dick Pantimas Tjupurrula was born at Yippa, north of Sandy Blight Junction, near the Northern Territory and Western Australia border. He was identified as the two-year-old infant 'Pandimatu' by Norman Tindale at Mt Liebig in 1932. He was the younger brother of great Papunya Tula artist Johnny Warangkula Tjupurrula (c.1925–2001), with whom he shared the Kalimpinpa water story and other Dreamings. He came with his family to Hermannsburg mission before the Second World War and he was recorded as a stockman at Haasts Bluff in 1957.

Dick Pantimas Tjupurrula later moved to Papunya and was one of the original shareholders of Papunya Tula Artists. He began to paint in earnest for Andrew Crocker in 1980, working mainly on small-scale canvases. Many of his works depicted the Kalimpinpa water story, also his Dreaming. Tjupurrula died in 1983, before his career had time to blossom.

MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

A modern art movement began at Papunya in central Australia in 1971, when Aboriginal men from the Western Desert were first encouraged to paint their stories with new materials. Geoffrey Bardon, a school teacher at Papunya community school, asked his students to paint a mural on the school walls, using ceremonial body and sand designs. Eventually a number of senior men came together to create a historic mural depicting the Honey Ant Dreaming associated with the Papunya community.

The mural, a proud symbol of Aboriginal culture, inspired other senior men to start painting. They took discarded materials from the settlement – fruit box ends, floor tiles, scraps of board – and unlocked ancient designs that until 1971 had been kept hidden from the uninitiated. The following year, the founding artists, keen to sell their work, formed their own company, Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd has operated successfully as an independent business ever since. Papunya Tula artists have transformed the way we see the land and the history of art in this country. Due to the 'big bang' effect of the Papunya Tula movement, Aboriginal art, in all its diverse forms, has become the mainstream of Australian contemporary art practice and has leapt onto the international stage.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

- Contrary to common perception, Aboriginal art is dynamic and has never been static. The complex meanings in Aboriginal art and its many different styles provide an opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal culture. Compare other diverse Aboriginal styles through the exhibition *The Gallery Ark*

SYMBOLISM

Throughout the Western Desert, ancestral beings emerged from the body of the land and travelled extensively. During their epic Dreaming journeys, ancestral beings created sources of water and other natural features, established laws for Aboriginal people to follow, and then entered into and became the land, leaving their spiritual power in the landscape.

In *Serpent Dreaming at Yippa* 1983 the artist depicts the creation story of his birthplace, Yippa, a small salt lake. Two great serpents came to Yippa from the east and began to fight. So fierce was their battle that it excavated the lake bed. One of the snakes was overpowered and it can be seen to this day in the form of a long, low and rocky hill: its head is a jutting rock. The other snake carried on westwards. In this painting the lake is shown with the snake and the abundant vegetation associated with water. The dark patches around the salt lake represent claypans.



Dick Pantimas
Tjupurrula
Luritja c.1930–1983
Serpent Dreaming at Yippa 1980
synthetic polymer paint
on canvas
60.8 x 51.0 cm
Purchased from
Admission Funds, 1988
© Estate of the artist,
courtesy of Aboriginal
Artists Agency, Sydney

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

Find another work in *The Gallery Ark* that represents a snake.

Did you know?

The name Papunya Tula is derived from *tula*, a small hill near Papunya, which is a Honey Ant Dreaming site.

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