

PGAV Submission

Creative State 2020+ Consultation



Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) Submission

Andrew Abbott
Deputy Secretary
Creative, Sport and Visitor Economies
Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
Level 31, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

29 August 2019

Dear Andrew

The Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Victorian Government's Creative State 2020+ Consultation. To inform our submission the PGAV held a consultation workshop with the public gallery sector in Victoria. We also sought feedback from our members on our draft submission to ensure it captured their experiences. The outcomes of this consultation underpin our submission, reflecting the opportunities and challenges that lay ahead for Victoria's public gallery sector.

ABOUT THE PGAV

The PGAV is the peak body representing 52 public galleries across metropolitan and regional Victoria. We deliver a range of services to support, develop and promote the sector within a national context. Our role is to build the capacity of Victoria's public gallery sector, enhancing their ability to present engaging visual art experience that deliver valuable cultural, social and economic returns to their communities.

OUR MEMBERS

The public gallery sector in Victoria is Australia's oldest — the National Gallery of Victoria was established in 1861 and was the nation's first public gallery. It was followed by the establishment of galleries across regional Victoria — the Art Gallery of Ballarat in 1884, Warrnambool Art Gallery in 1886,

Bendigo Art Gallery in 1887 and Geelong Gallery in 1896. Today the public gallery sector in Victoria is large and diverse — spanning **31 metropolitan galleries, 3 outer metropolitan galleries and 18 regional galleries** across Victoria.

Our members include the state's flagship visual art institution, the **National Gallery of Victoria**, as well as **ACMI and Arts Centre Melbourne**, together with **university art museums (6), independent not-for-profit galleries (12) and local government owned and/or operated galleries (31)** — comprised of 15 regional and 16 metropolitan galleries. The majority of our members are small galleries — with up to 5 FTE staff (67%), followed by medium galleries — with 6 to 25 FTE staff (31%), and large galleries — with 26+ FTE staff (1%).

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF THE PUBLIC GALLERY SECTOR

Local government is currently the largest supporter of the public gallery sector in Victoria, supporting 33 galleries and, if you exclude the NGV, providing 40% of income to the sector. The balance of sector income is derived from commercial operations (20%), State Government (12%), philanthropy (12%), other income sources (11%), Federal Government (2%), the private sector (2%) and the university sector (2%).

STRENGTH OF THE PUBLIC GALLERY SECTOR

Our research reveals that last year our members delivered **697 exhibitions, 3,356 public programs, 3,736 education programs** to over **6.7 million visitors**. They presented the work of over **4,000 visual artists**. Our members hold over **1 million items** in their collections with a combined value of **\$4.9 billion**. The sector employs **733 full-time equivalent staff** and is supported by **1272 volunteers**.

SUPPORTING VISUAL ARTISTS

Artists are at the centre of everything public galleries do. Their work is featured in our exhibitions, commissioned and acquired for our permanent collections and they are regularly commissioned to deliver artist talks and workshops for gallery audiences. Public galleries are strong supporters of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual artists — our members have strong holdings of First Nations

art and cultural items in their collections, from early bark paintings to contemporary art, and they regularly exhibit the work of First Nations people. Strengthening the sustainability of visual arts practice is critical to the future of public galleries.

VITAL COMMUNITY HUBS

Public and education programs are two of the ways galleries have established themselves as vital to their communities. Public programs are aimed at building awareness and appreciation of the visual arts. While Education Programs are aimed at creative learning opportunities for the community - including pre-school activities, school holiday programs, school incursions and excursions, as well as life-long learning opportunities for the wider community.

The many workshops, talks, performances and social events delivered by galleries create a sense of community and connection, reducing social isolation and enriching the lives of those they reach. As centres of artistic, creative and intellectual inquiry, galleries provide a place for the community to gain inspiration and to learn. They generate significant increases in positive social indicators, including community cohesion, health and improved educational outcomes.

Public galleries have started on the journey of supporting and engaging with First Nations people in their communities. Shepparton Art Museum, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Bendigo Art Gallery and Tarra Warra Museum Art Museum have appointed **First Nations Curators** over the past three years, while Warrnambool Art Gallery and Gippsland Art Gallery are in the process of appointing local First Nations people to their organisations.

UNIQUELY POSITIONED TO DELIVER A CREATIVE STATE

Given the deep community roots, diversity, scale and whole of state breadth of the organisations represented by the PGAV, the sector is uniquely positioned to bring a range of benefits to the people of Victoria. These benefits are in close alignment with the guiding principles of the next Creative Industries Strategy of *First People's first, Whole of state, Whole of ecosystem and All voices welcome*. The sector currently delivers outstanding experiences to Victorians, contributing to the well-being, universal cultural access and vibrancy of the communities it serves, but faces a number of sustainability challenges, particularly in relation to programming, staffing, collection management and ageing infrastructure. These challenges, which closely mirror many of the issues and questions raised in the Victorian Government's Creative State



Image: Bendigo Art Gallery

2020+ discussion themes, are outlined below along with opportunities and recommendations.

Challenges and opportunities facing the public gallery sector:

STAFFING FOR SUCCESS

PGAV research shows attendances at public galleries grew 26% and programming increased by 45% between 2017 and 2018, while staffing remained relatively static, growing by 2%. Galleries are delivering more programs to larger audiences with less resources — a situation that is unsustainable. To address staffing challenges in the sector, the PGAV recently developed a *Fact Sheet on Staffing Levels & Position Titles* which outlines industry best practice for public galleries.

Small galleries face additional risks

The majority of PGAV members (67%) are small galleries, employing less than 5 FTE staff. A high proportion of these galleries rely on the Director or Curator to also manage the collection — a situation that is resulting in high burn out in staff at small galleries and is placing their \$148 million collections at undue risk. The PGAV Fact Sheet clearly stipulates the need for dedicated collection management staff at small galleries, to minimise risk to their collections.

RECOMMENDATION: Victorian Government adopt *PGAV Staffing Levels & Position Titles* as industry best practice as part of its OIP and Regional Partnerships Funding Agreements with public galleries.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government supports the PGAV to tailor Arts Centre Melbourne's *Arts Wellbeing Collective* to meet the specific needs of the public gallery sector.

Rate Capping affecting staffing levels

56% of galleries operating within local government have cited **Rate Capping** as a key inhibitor of staffing levels, while 65% anticipate Rate Capping will result in cuts to their annual budgets and staffing levels in the future. The proposed impact will see local government galleries reduce their programming, resulting in less opportunities for visual artists.

RECOMMENDATION: Victorian Government review Rate Capping and encourage Local Government adopt *PGAV Staffing Levels & Position Titles* as industry best practice.

Independent galleries face high burnout

Staff at independent not-for-profit galleries are being paid significantly less — up to 20% less — than their colleagues within local and state government. Not only are the salaries lower, independent galleries tend to employ less staff. This leads to burnout and a high turnover of staff. Our independent galleries are spending a significant amount of time and resources on recruiting staff, which could otherwise be committed to their programs and engaging new audiences.

RECOMMENDATION: Victorian Government funds independent public galleries to remunerate staff at *PGAV Benchmarked Salary Ranges* and this be factored into OIP Funding Agreements.

Opportunity for local government to lead on industry standards

Local government is the largest supporter of the public gallery sector in Victoria. However, galleries are sometimes seen as a luxury rather than a vital service. Their budgets are often the first to be cut when times are tough, and their value within the community is subject to the whim of elected Councillors.

Recently, there has been a trend towards “de-professionalisation” of the public gallery sector. Gallery Director position titles are being reclassified as “visual art coordinators” — making it difficult to secure loans from major lending institutions. Gallery Director roles are being made redundant, replaced with a Director who oversees both the gallery and the performing arts centre. While some Directors are being encouraged to take on the management of performing arts centres and libraries — reducing their ability to effectively manage gallery operations. To reverse this trend, the PGAV has published the *Fact Sheet on Staffing Levels and Position Titles*, we are also working with our colleagues interstate

on national benchmarking and national gallery standards, and we are exploring research into the value of public galleries to their communities.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government assist the PGAV to undertake research demonstrating the value of public galleries to their communities, as well as support our work on national standards for public galleries.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government continue the role of Arts & Culture Policy Advisor at the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), to ensure local governments across the state are supporting the professional standards of public galleries.

Education staff key to deeper engagement

Specialist Education staff at public galleries are not adequately supported. Creative Victoria's Strategic Partnerships Program (SPP) program funds part-time roles, which leaves galleries reliant on philanthropy and the private education sector to make up the short-fall. The amount of work involved in securing these roles over the longer term places a significant burden on the S2M public gallery sector, which is seeing a drop in specialist Education staff. Given that education programs at public galleries play a vital role in fostering our future visual artists, as well as developing appreciation and engagement with the visual arts across the community, an increase in Education Staff is an opportunity to invest in the future of the Creative Industries in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government increased support for Creative Victoria's SPP program to ensure an increase in full-time Education staff at more galleries across Victoria.

First Nations Curators – getting beyond 'short-termism'

First Nations Curator positions within public galleries have been funded on a short-term basis to date, often on 12 month contracts, through local or state government and philanthropic organisations. Our members have demonstrated that the success of these roles involves the building of relationships with First Nations communities over more sustained periods of time. The short-term funding of these roles places them at risk of failure.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government provide multi-year funding to strengthen the impact and success of First Nations Curators within public galleries.

Building diversity

A lack of cultural diversity is a significant issue for the public gallery sector in Victoria. The problem is systemic — from low levels of cultural diversity on

gallery boards and advisory committees, through to the artists represented in public gallery exhibition programs and collections. As a sector we do not know the size of current CALD audiences — anecdotally we know it is larger when we exhibit work by CALD artists, however more research is required to identify challenges and opportunities. (Artist diversity is address under the next section on “Programming”).

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government provide multi-year funding of CALD internships and senior positions within public galleries to drive cultural diversity in public galleries.

RECOMMENDATION: Galleries in receipt of OIP and Regional Partnerships be encouraged to increase CALD representation on their boards and advisory committees.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government commission research into current and potential CALD audiences at public galleries, to help the sector identify challenges and opportunities.



Image: Sarah Jane Hall in the collection store at Koorie Heritage Trust as part of the PGAV's *Artists in the Black across Victoria* program 2018.

INVESTMENT IN PROGRAMMING IS AN INVESTMENT IN VISUAL ARTISTS

The lack of funding for gallery programs — exhibitions, public and education programs — is an issue affecting all of our member galleries, regardless of their size or geographic location. With funding relatively static due to Rate Capping in local government, or the lack of indexation of Creative Victoria OIP and Regional Partnerships funding, our members are telling us that program budgets are being tightened.

An increase in program funding will enable public galleries to **build the sustainability and diversity of visual art practice** by: 1) engaging more visual artists in their annual programs; 2) the payment of artist fees at NAVA recommended rates; 3) commissioning more visual artists to create new work for exhibitions; and 4) enabling curators to dedicate more time to research, resulting in greater diversity of artists featured in public gallery programming.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government strengthen its support of visual artists by increasing the level of program funding available through Creative Victoria's OIP and Regional Partnerships programs.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government make program funding available to local government galleries in metropolitan and outer metropolitan Melbourne — creating a whole of state approach to building the sustainability of visual artists.

COLLECTIONS AT RISK

Our members hold over 1 million items in their collections with a combined value of \$4.9 billion. When you remove the NGV, ACMI and Arts Centre Melbourne's collections from these figures, the small-to-medium public gallery sector holds 128,141 items in their collections with a combined value of \$600 million.

Conservation — a luxury rather than a necessity
Despite holding extremely valuable collections featuring nationally significant works of art, public galleries spend less than 4% of their turnover on collection management. Equally concerning, the small-to-medium public gallery sector across Victoria employs 12.9FTE specialist collection management staff. Anecdotally we know that galleries are delaying the conservation of art works as a direct result of limited collection management staffing and constrained program budgets. The result is Victoria's public collections are being placed at undue risk.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government establish a fund that public galleries can apply to undertake conservation of collection items. This would have the added advantage of creating a register of the state's conservation needs, as well as tracking progress over time.

Raising awareness of Victoria's public collections

While the state/territory galleries and national gallery collections are highly regarded by Australian audiences, there is an incredible opportunity to promote the national significance of the collections that reside in public gallery collections across metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional Victoria.

a) Digitisation of public collections

27% of public gallery collections have been digitised, 19% are partially digitised and 44% are not yet digitised. The vast majority of those not yet digitised (65%) aspire to digitisation of collections, however staffing levels, expertise and budgets are key barriers.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government work with the PGAV to build the skills and capacity of public galleries to digitise their collections.

b) Public gallery collections key to creative economy

Anecdotally we know that increasing awareness of public gallery collections leads to an increase in cultural tourism. Perhaps the most famous example is the Mona Lisa, which attracts 6 million people to the Louvre each year. And while collections are good at attracting cultural tourists, they also playing a key role in fostering creative thinking — which underpins creative communities and creative economies. The Ian Potter Museum of Art at the University of Melbourne uses its collections to assist core teaching, learning and research activities, including in criminal law, mental health nursing, optometry and audiology (see case study on page 11). The value of public gallery collections has not yet been captured and represents an incredible opportunity to foster a creative state.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government support the PGAV to undertake research into the social, cultural and economic value of public gallery collections, with the findings to inform promotion of the Victoria's public collections to intra-state, interstate and international cultural tourists.

FIT FOR PURPOSE INFRASTRUCTURE

Our research reveals 40% of our member galleries are planning a gallery redevelopment in the next 5 years. The top three reasons are:

- 1) the need for additional exhibition spaces; to ensure the permanent collection is on display and the delivery of temporary exhibitions;
- 2) improving visitor amenities — creative workshop spaces, cafes and retail; and
- 3) ageing buildings — collection stores that leak, inefficient air conditioning and lighting systems that have high energy demands, loading bays that cannot cope with large touring exhibitions, for instance.

Gallery redevelopments and new buildings are expensive undertakings that often require funding from a range of departments within Federal, State and Local Governments, yet there is no clear process, resulting in an ad hoc approach. Meanwhile, there are no dedicated funding steam to assist with rectifying ageing infrastructure and reducing carbon emissions.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government develop a system to prioritise and streamline Federal, State and Local Government funding of public gallery redevelopments.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government establish an infrastructure funding program to address projects up to \$2 million, with an emphasis on projects which reduce carbon emissions.

REGIONAL GALLERIES — ADDRESSING THE TYRRANY OF DISTANCE

Regional galleries face particular challenges due to the tyranny of distance — from attracting and retaining qualified staff, to drawing visitors from across the state.

Attracting and retaining qualified staff

A key challenge for regional galleries is the ability to attract and retain appropriately qualified and experienced gallery staff. The PGAV is exploring a partnership with the University of Melbourne's Faculty of Arts' Art Curatorship and Arts and Cultural Management Masters programs – to pilot a regional internship program to address skills shortages and encourage graduates to work regionally — this is currently unfunded.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government partner with the PGAV and the University of Melbourne to pilot a regional internship program across Victoria.

Investment in regional staff professional development

In 2018, the PGAV secured funding from Creative Victoria for regional bursaries. The bursary program enabled 23 regional gallery staff to attend the PGAV's Professional Development Program and access high-quality, industry-specific training. 100% of recipients reported they would not be able to attend without this support. This funding was provided as a once-off program, whereas the training needs of regional gallery staff are ongoing.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government provide multi-year bursary funding to the PGAV to enable the ongoing professional development of regional gallery staff.

Reinstating Regional Partnerships meetings

In the past, Creative Victoria's Regional Partnership staff would travel and meet with regional gallery staff once a year. Our members tell us these visits were invaluable, allowing them to demonstrate their work and raise context-specific issues with Creative Victoria staff. Due to staffing and budget constraints at Creative Victoria these visits have ended.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government reinstate Creative Victoria Regional Partnership staff visits to regional galleries.

Improving the reach and cost of public transport in the regions

Blockbuster exhibitions at Bendigo Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ballarat and Geelong Gallery have all benefitted from the frequency of V/Line services. While Shepparton Art Museum reported a significant increase in visitation during the 2018 Victorian Seniors Festival, when V/Line services were free to senior citizens. Clearly there is a significant opportunity to boost cultural tourism and local

economies through improving public transport links to regions with public galleries.

RECOMMENDATION: the Victorian Government undertake an economic impact study of the benefits of increasing V/Line services to Gippsland, Wangaratta, Mildura, Shepparton, Wangaratta and Wodonga, and improving public transport links to other regions (Hamilton & Horsham), and reducing the cost of regional public transport.

CONCLUSION

As our submission makes clear, the public gallery sector in Victoria is a major contributor to the artistic, cultural, social and economic wealth of the state. However, the sector faces a number of sustainability issues, particularly in relation to programming, staffing, collection management and ageing infrastructure. The recommendations outlined in our submission will go a long way to addressing these challenges and ensuring the public gallery sector continues to deliver exciting visual arts programs and the many benefits they bring to the people of Victoria.

We extend our best wishes for the development of Creative State 2020+ and welcome the opportunity to expand upon any of the recommendations outlined in our submission.

Yours sincerely



Sue Roff
PGAV President



Anne Robertson
PGAV Executive Officer

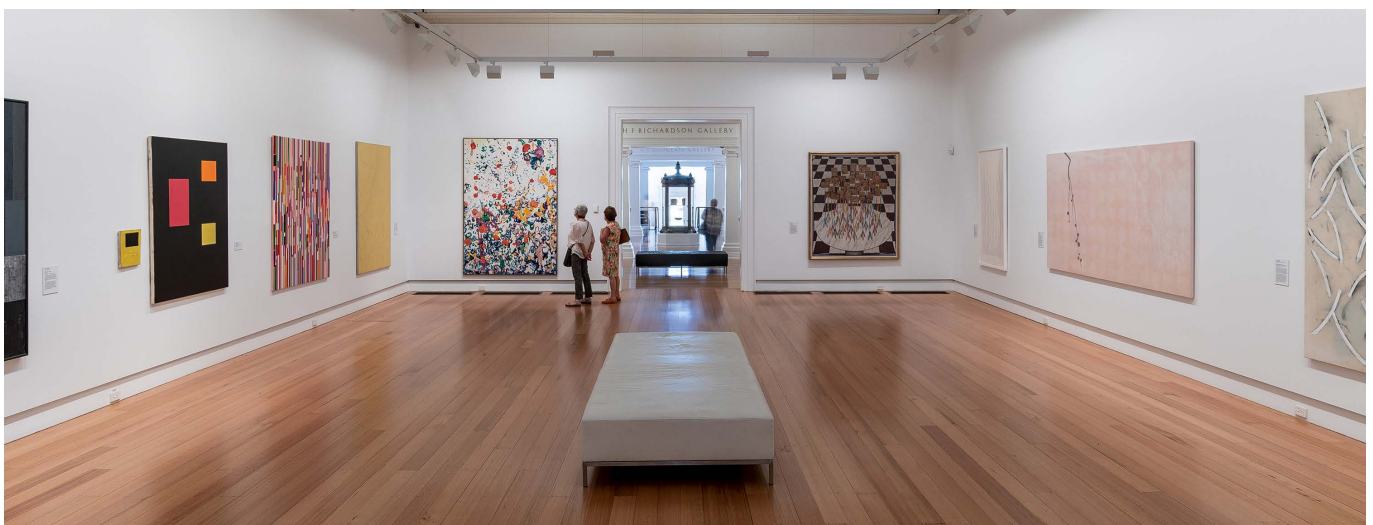


Image: Permanent collection, Geelong Gallery, 2018. Photo by Andrew Curtis.

Geelong Gallery — investing in the region's diverse youth



Image: Participants in the Geelong Gallery Youth Ambassador Program, 2019.

Geelong Gallery delivers a Youth Ambassador Program for people aged 16 – 26 from diverse backgrounds. This program aims to connect and empower young people living in the community through engagement in the arts, training and well-being activities.

In 2019 the Youth Ambassador Program provided training, work-experience, short-term casual employment, mentoring, arts workshops and art creation over a 12-week period, with young people participating from Northern Futures, Diversitat, Northern Bay College and Belmont High School. The Youth Ambassadors gained valuable learning experiences, an understanding of the arts industry, career development opportunities and enhanced their self-confidence and leadership skills.

"Working as a Youth Ambassador for the Gallery is a good experience to learn about how much work goes in to putting the art on the walls, it's more complicated than you might think, I'm learning a lot of skills, that I will be able to use later on in my career." (Katrina, 19, Student, Northern Futures)

"I'm Congolese by origin, but I was born in Tanzania. Because I've only been in Australia for 7 months now, being in this program has helped me in public speaking and helped me connecting with people." (James, 21, Student, The Gordon)

WAG — Girls Are Full STEAM Ahead!



Image: Participants in a *Girls Art Full STEAM Ahead!* workshops at WAG.

Warrnambool Art Gallery (WAG) recently engaged with female-identifying students in rural and regional South West Victoria to change the prevailing perception by girls that STEM 'is not for me'. The project aimed to create a new generation of digitally capable female artists and arts professionals.

Girls Are Full STEAM Ahead! was delivered at WAG through a series of exhibitions, focus groups and artist-led workshops with: Girl Geek Academy, Robotics Academy, Code Like a Girl, Tech Girls Are Superheroes, iXplainIT and local design company Lovelock Studio. The program was co-designed with participants to spark interest, foster creativity and build confidence. Following feedback from teachers and students, WAG ran two large-scale events designed to be accessible to both students in Warrnambool and those in more regional and rural areas. Each event was repeated so that girls who are home-schooled or whose schools did not get involved, were also able to sign-up and take part.

Girls Are Full STEAM Ahead! has been vital to engaging more female identifying students in STEAM subjects across the region. WAG has established a GirlsSteam Club, which enables

project participants to meet regularly, extending the legacy of the program. While merchandise developed especially for the program, including badges and stickers, continue to be sold in the WAG shop, providing an opportunity for gallery staff to promote this exciting initiative with visitors. For WAG, the program has widened its audience significantly: teachers and individuals in maths, IT and science who engaged with the gallery for the first time through this program are now regular visitors and contributors. Girls are definitely full STEAM ahead at WAG!

New SAM — a creative future for a regional community



Image: Denton Corker Marshall design concept for the new SAM.

Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) is currently undergoing its most ambitious development in the 80-years since the first painting was acquired for the Collection in 1936. In May 2015, Greater Shepparton City Council resolved to accept the findings of a Feasibility Study and Business Case for a new \$34.5M art museum in Shepparton.

Importantly, the new SAM will be more than just an art museum. It will be a community space, one that fosters pride and identity, and a place where people can come together through various activities. It offers a much needed new home to the Shepparton Art Museum, sorely in need of adequate collection storage and back-of-house spaces, increased exhibition spaces, and venues for workshops and educational activities. SAM's unique ceramics collection will be showcased throughout the building, extending beyond the gallery spaces. The new SAM will also house the Visitor Centre; commercial spaces including a café and rooftop area for functions and events; and Kaiela Arts, Shepparton's local Aboriginal community arts centre. Co-locating each of these unique and complementary services in the one building is a first in Shepparton, and possibly even in Victoria.

With extensive Indigenous consultation and collaboration, the building has the potential to be a major project of reconciliation and acknowledgement, working with and celebrating local Indigenous communities' continuous living culture, people and history alongside the history of Shepparton and its unique regional Victorian context. For SAM, this narrative will be told through its exhibition programme, and public and educational activities, drawing on the strengths of the art museum's Collection to tell a story that is relevant, and engages with contemporary global ideas.

As part of the roadmap to the new SAM, in 2016 the art museum appointed Belinda Briggs, a proud Yorta Yorta and Wamba Wamba woman, as SAM's Community Engagement Officer. Belinda co-ordinated the 2016 and 2018 *Indigenous Ceramic Awards*, took part in the Wesfarmers National Gallery of Australia Indigenous Leadership program, and curated the exhibition *Ever Present: Recent Works from the SAM Collection* to explore the Spirit of Country and the myriad ways it permeates life, informs lore, traditions and ceremonies. Belinda sees her role at SAM as, "a facilitator between community and SAM, SAM and community".

The Potter applies creative thinking to criminal law



Image:
Stieg Persson
Philosophy of Individualism and Goji Berries 2012-2013
oil on linen
183 x 230 cm
The University of Melbourne Art Collection. Purchased 2018.
2018.0097

Considering the topic 'Graffiti and street art: Criminal images in public space', students from the University of Melbourne's Criminal Law and Political Justice undergraduate program visited the survey exhibition Stieg Persson: Polyphonic at the Ian Potter Museum of Art. Here, they spent time with a suite of recent paintings featuring shop signage and laneway graffiti tags sourced from the upper-middle-class suburb of Brighton. This breaking down of the boundaries between street and gallery, and unauthorised and authorised expression, facilitated breakout tutorial discussions around ideas of public civility and the criminalisation of certain behaviours in public spaces — the street and the museum.

Holding classes in the gallery might be the first time some students have ever visited an art exhibition, while for others, this space is more familiar. Many students are surprised by the intersections between the art and the subject material they are addressing, and appreciate stepping out of the conventional classroom. While there is often clear content-based learning, students are also acquiring new, transferable skills in the process. It invites open-ended

thinking and a willingness to embrace ambiguity and nuance. Students also develop skills in working together, as a team, discussing the art and considering its possibilities, as an object of learning.

"The exhibition by Stieg Persson, in which the artists uses graffiti motifs (tracings) in his work and overlays it with other images and Rococco style design was a wonderful opportunity to draw out the tensions between street art/graffiti and gallery art, in the subject Criminal Law and Political Justice. Students were invited to reflect on these tensions, and to explore the intricate processes which enable some forms of expression to be deemed offensive under criminal law, at the same time that other forms of expression (art) are valued and cherished. In both instances, the work can be in a public space. But while one is given authority and legitimacy the other is regarded as excessive and a sign of disorder and criminality."

– Dr Claire Loughnan, Teaching Fellow, School of Social and Political Sciences, Faculty of Arts

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Cover image:

Priya Srinivasan performing *Inside/Out* with musician Hari Sivanesan at the launch of the exhibition *Continental Shift: Contemporary Art and South Asia* at Bunjil Place Gallery, August 2019.