Introduction

This exhibition includes works that use a variety of media and explores the relationship between the horse and Australian society, history and culture. The exhibition consists of work by some of Australia’s most notable artists such as John Brack, Richard Goodwin, Hans Heysen, Noel McKenna, Julie Rrap, Ken Whisson, Fred Williams and Anne Zahalka, together with works by a number of emerging artists.

Cultural Icons

A cultural icon is an image or symbol that is easily recognised and significant to a particular group. That object has a special status and is very important to that cultural group.

The Horse

Having played a large part in Australia’s history, the horse is considered an icon in Australian culture. From the excitement of the Melbourne Cup, the epic Man From Snowy River to the legendary Phar Lap, horses have the power to capture the imagination of our nation. The horse is an animal of power and beauty and has been used since pioneer days for business and pleasure.

Australian National Identity

Australia is a country of diverse cultures, images and people. The way we view ourselves as a nation has been shaped by events and people. In art and literature images of the horse have been used to establish national identity. From the legendary wild brumbies of Banjo Patterson’s epic poem The Man From Snowy River, the working stock horses in the outback, to Australia’s oldest sport - horse racing, the horse has been depicted in Australian art extensively as part of our national heritage.

The Man From Snowy River

The Man From Snowy River is one of Australia’s most famous poems and was written by Andrew Barton (Banjo) Paterson. It is set in the Snowy Mountains, part of the Australian high country, where many of Australia’s post colonial myths and traditions of identity originated.

The poem tells the story of ‘The Man from Snowy River’ who through his courage and skill becomes a legend when he is able to return a runaway horse to its owner.

European settlers in the Australian Alps in the 1830s and long term grazing had a negative impact on this sensitive environment. Much of the high country is now part of the network of national parks and wilderness areas which make up the Australian Alps National Parks system.
ACTIVITIES

Making

Exploring the theme of identity, students begin by comparing different contexts for identity such as personal, social and political. They could collect images and or objects which say something about an identity. Students then produce an artwork using mixed media which they feel encapsulates their own cultural identity. Media could include installation, photography, drawing or painting.

Appraising

+ Students look at other contemporary artists who raise the issue of cultural identity in their work eg. Gordon Bennett. Discuss how they deal with cultural identity in their work.
+ Australian cultural identity is increasingly diverse and pluralistic. What are some other cultural icons in contemporary Australia? What influences on our society have contributed to these icons?

Tours

Free guided tours of Bloodlines: Art and the Horse with the QUT Art Museum Curator (Public Programs) are available for all age groups and interests. Tours must be booked in advance. Phone 07 3138 5370 or email artmuseum@qut.edu.au to make your booking.

References

Further Reading

Online Resources
http://www.racingmuseum.com.au

BloodLines: Art and the Horse
11 April - 7 June
FREE ENTRY

QUT Art Museum
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QUT Art Museum is proudly supported by

Education Kit produced by Maree Purnell (Public Programs Intern, QUT Art Museum)

INFORMATION

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Then fast the horsemen followed, where the gorges deep and black
Resounded to the thunder of their tread,
And the stockwhips woke the echoes, and they fiercely answered back.
From cliffs and crags that beetled overhead.
And upward, ever upward, the wild horses held their way,
Where mountain ash and kurrajong grew wild.
And the old man muttered fiercely, "We may bid the mob good day,
No man can hold them down the other side."
When they reached the mountain's summit, even Clancy took a pull,
It well might make the boldest hold their breath,
The wild hop scrub grew thickly, and the hidden storm was full.
Of wombat holes, and any slip was death.
But the man from Snowy River let the pony have his head,
And he swung his stockwhip round and gave a cheer,
And he raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed,
While the others stood and watched in very fear.
He sent the flint stones flying, but the pony kept his feet,
He cleared the fallen timber in his stride.
And the man from Snowy River never shifted in his seat --
It was grand to see that mountain horseman ride.
Through the stringy barks and saplings, on the rough and broken ground,
Down the hillside at a racing pace he went;
And he never drew the bridle till he landed safe and sound.
At the bottom of that terrible descent.
He was right among the horses as they climbed the further hill,
And the watchers on the mountain standing mute,
Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely, he was right among them still,
As he raced across the clearing in pursuit.
Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met
In the ranges, but a final glimpse reveals.
On a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet,
With the man from Snowy River at their heels.
And he ran them single-handed till their sides were white
With foam:
He followed like a bloodhound on their track,
Till they halted cowed and beaten, then he turned their heads for home,
And alone and unassisted brought them back.
But his hardy mountain pony he could scarcely raise a trot,
He was blood from hip to shoulder from the spur;
But his pluck was still undaunted, and his courage fiery hot,
For never yet was mountain horse a cur.
And down by Kosciusko, where the pine-clad ridges rise
Their torn and rugged battlements on high,
Where the air is clear as crystal, and the white stars fairly blaze
At midnight in the cold and frosty sky,
And where around the Overflow the reedbeds sweep and sway
To the breezes, and the rolling plains are wide,
The man from Snowy River is a household word to-day,
And the stockmen tell the story of his ride.
