

***Vis-ability: Artwork from the QUT Art Collection* exhibition wall text (plain text)**

History of the Collection

Established in 1945, the Collection precedes the Art Museum by 55 years. It developed organically from the disparate collecting activities of a number of vocational education and technical training institutions in Brisbane that eventually came together to form QUT. Acquisitions were often based on selections from staff, including significant individuals such as Betty Churcher, Mervyn Muhling and William Robinson. As such, the artworks collected during the 1960s and 70s reflect the distinct personalities of different individuals, as well as the practical constraints of collecting and displaying works within small teaching institutions. Today, QUT is committed to growing and strengthening the Collection each year through an acquisitions program that includes purchases and gifts. Comprising more than 3,000 objects, the Collection includes paintings, sculpture, ceramics, and works on paper, chiefly by Australian artists, but a small group of international works—mostly prints—augments the holdings. The works in this exhibition have been collected during the last five years.

Collecting ethos

The QUT Art Collection's unique and colourful history shapes our values and philosophies to the current day. The Collection was founded on the desire to foster the visual arts within the community—both as a teaching resource and part of the institution's civic responsibilities.

As a tertiary institution that is still relatively young, and with a reputation for being nimble and adaptable, QUT seeks to build a unique Collection that reflects the diversity and agility of the institution. It aims to fill a void in Australian art collections, rather than mirroring the collecting patterns of other institutions. QUT's Collection is an important thread in the fabric of Queensland as well as national art collections—it is one part of a broader story of Australian art.

Acquisitions that build on existing strengths, fill prominent gaps, and contextualise existing holdings take precedence. Rather than amass a large general collection, the Museum continues the tradition of building one of modest scope, where only the finest works are acquired based on principles that value excellence, individuality and exceptional skill as integral components of the visual arts and creative achievement.

Oodgeroo Collection

Australian Indigenous art forms a central part of the QUT Art Collection, with the first acquisitions of two bark paintings from Maningrida in western Arnhem Land being purchased by student donations in the mid-1960s. The major part of the collection has been assembled during the 1990s and continues today. Encompassing a wide range of styles and media, and including paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, ceramics and fibre, the Oodgeroo Collection was named in honour of political activist, artist and educator Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920–93). Collection holdings provide a perspective from past and present-day Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art practitioners, drawing inspiration from both traditional forms and themes, and from contemporary Australian culture.

In 2018, QUT's newly appointed Vice-Chancellor, Margaret Sheil AO, designated special funds to purchase works by contemporary Indigenous Australian artists, in order to strengthen these holdings. This acquisition included works by Elisa Jane Carmichael, Karla Dickens, Elsie Gabori, Emily Ngarnal Evans and Dale Harding. A selection of these works is on display throughout the exhibition.

Audio descriptions

Throughout the exhibition are three audio descriptions by Dr Bree Hadley of artworks by Karla Dickens and Karla Marchesi, and a collaborative work by Lyndell Brown, Charles Green and Jon Cattapan. These audio descriptions are designed to be heard before the artwork is seen, which is why the artworks are hidden inside pods. Audiences are encouraged to listen to the description before looking through the viewing windows to see the artwork. For many of us, our experience of the world is ocular-centric, and sound is often considered a secondary sense. The audio descriptions are designed to encourage visitors to engage with work through senses other than sight. Audio description can add to the impact of an artwork, not just for audiences who are blind or have low vision, but for broader audiences, using the unique aesthetic and meaning-making possibilities of words to amplify the experience of encountering an artwork.

Wondrous Goggles

The Wondrous Goggles project identifies design requirements for a portable technology to represent the experiential world of people who are blind or have low vision, with the aim of contributing to raise awareness about inclusive places for work and play. The need for this exploratory technology is predominantly educational, as a tool to inform designers, policy makers and technology developers of how people with blindness or low vision experience public spaces.

The Wondrous Goggles are an Empathy Experience Device. They are specifically designed to facilitate an understanding of the navigational and spatial perception of people with low vision. A lightweight head-mounted device, the Wondrous Goggles are comprised of headphones and a visor.

The device has three functions:

- audio narration by someone who is blind or has vision loss, navigating a particular place
- simulation of a low vision condition
- voice memo recording allowing users to record ideas and reflections while navigating

During use, the Wondrous Goggles provide a tool for the user to gain a sense of limited vision and provides a vehicle for the wearer to embark upon a process of feeling, sensing and reflecting while listening to the narration of someone who has navigated the space with low vision. Unlike other technologies that create virtual reality or an augmented reality based on vision alone, the Wondrous Goggles create a multisensorial empathic experience through the lived experience of a person with low vision. This project seeks to explore the design requirements for the development of a portable device that stakeholders can use to gain understanding of people's lived experiences in order to create environments that are more inclusive.

Tactile object

This tactile object is an interpretation of Catherine Parker's painting, *Present portal* 2017. The initial design for the object was conceived during a three-day co-design workshop at QUT, with the artist, academics and experts (Sarah Boulton, Jack Fitzwalter, Dr Megan Strickfaden, Dr Jasmien Herssens, Dr Janice Rieger), and several QUT staff and Design students. The workshop participants worked collaboratively to come up with three initial prototypes for the object using cardboard and craft supplies. Over the following weeks, the design was refined and digitally rendered in collaboration with Anna Svensdotter, and 3D-printed.

Designed to be interpreted through touch, the object encompasses the concepts and ideas imbued in the painting, beyond the visual elements. It centres on the idea of a journey through time and across different places. Audiences are encouraged to spend time exploring the object with their hands.

Soundscape

This soundscape by Aymeric Vildieu is a sonic interpretation of Catherine Parker's painting. Vildieu is a DJ and produces a weekly radio show. Owning a large collection of sound recordings and tracks, he delved into his collection to produce a live mix of 29 sounds that reflect his interpretation of *Present portal*. As is the nature of contemplating and interpreting artwork, the soundscape incorporates Vildieu's own experiences, emotions and sensitivities.

Imagined as a spiritual journey, this soundscape brings together natural sounds recorded in Queensland, Tibet and India, among other places. Starting with the sounds of a Tibetan ceremony, which emerges a little bit like a call to prayer, Vildieu imagined the journey depicted in the painting as a need to leave the material contingencies of the world to embark on a deeper and spiritual endeavour. This endeavour begins with the sound of a key—the keyhole being a central visual element in *Present portal*. This journey in the soundscape then continues through an exploration of a forest, which is like a rediscovery of one's true self through an awareness of humanity's toll on Mother Nature and Gaia's prevalence over humans. Next comes the rain, as a purifying element and the wind to chase it and dry the mind. Through this process comes the realisation that another life with other values is possible. Further in the quest is the sound of a geyser that morphs into various sounds of rivers and brooks where the intensity of the flow gradually slows down to rest near a Buddhist temple which invites entry with a call to prayer manifested—according to Vildieu's imagination—by the sound of a horn.

Maker space

Which of your senses do you use to experience art? Sight, smell, hearing, taste or touch? Often in art galleries we use our eyes, the sense of sight, only. However, we can use our other senses to have an expanded experience of art that goes beyond the visual.

In the Maker space, you are invited to access resources and reading material and make your own tactile artwork. You can take your artwork home with you or display it on the hexagon panels along this wall for others to experience. As well as the artworks made by visitors and workshop participants, there is a 3D-printed tactile object and soundscape behind you, interpreting Catherine Parker's painting, *Present portal*.

During this exhibition, there are regular workshops held in this space called *Making visible*, in which students engage in a design process to create a small tactile artwork, which is inspired by an original artwork in this exhibition.

Find out more about the *Making visible* workshop and tactile artwork design process on the QUT Art Museum website.