

Mark Shorter



Mark Shorter, *Two Sketches for Antipodysseus*, 2013, two channel HD video installation, video still. Camera: Jürgen Kerkovius

Contemporary Art on the Road is a unique program that provides access to artists and art experts from some of Melbourne's leading art institutions. This resource was created to introduce teachers to a range of hands-on, expertly designed strategies and resources for teaching contemporary art in their classroom.

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Contemporary Art on the Road is an initiative developed by Gertrude Contemporary and in partnership with Monash University Museum of Art, the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority and three regional Victorian galleries: Latrobe Regional Gallery, Horsham Regional Art Gallery and Shepparton Art Museum.



About the Artist

Mark Shorter makes performances and installations that question dominant narratives around landscape, gender and the body by stretching and turning the ideologies that sit deep in their form to see what bends or breaks. While he often performs as himself he also makes art through a variety of guises such as the hollow southern-styled gent Renny Kodgers, the quixotic journeyman Tino La Bamba, and the time-travelling landscape painting critic Schleimgurgeln. These performance investigations express a contemporary grotesque and propose an art that is guttural, visceral and not beholden to the cerebral.

Mark Shorter is a Melbourne-based artist and Head of Sculpture and Spatial Practice at the Victoria College of the Arts, Melbourne. He studied at the National Art School, Sydney and the Sydney College of the Arts where he completed a PhD in Visual Arts. Recent exhibitions and performances include:

The Lonesome Receiver, Gertrude Glasshouse, Melbourne (2018); *Hello Stranger*, Campbelltown Art Centre, Campbelltown (2018); *6m of Plinth*, Artspace, Sydney (2016); *Can't Look, Can't Look Away*, Counihan Gallery, Melbourne (2016); *Mapping La Mancha*, Physics Room, Christchurch, New Zealand (2015); *50 Ways to Kill Renny Kodgers*, Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart (2014); *The Groker*, Plato's Cave, EIDEA House, New York, USA (2015); *Obscure Presence*, Boxcopy Gallery, Brisbane (2014); and *Acts of Exposure*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart (2013). From 2010 to 2012 Shorter was the host of *The Renny Kodgers Quiz Hour* on FBi94.5FM. His practice has been critically explored in the publications, *Mapping La Mancha* (2016), *What is Performance Art?* (2016) and *Quixotic Visions*, Lismore Regional Gallery (2013).

What ideas/ concepts do you base your artworks on?

My work is concerned with questioning dominant narratives around gender, power and the image. I focus in particular on constructions of masculinity because I identify as male and I want to open up the space of masculinity and how it is performed so that it can be thought of in a more complex and vulnerable way.

Why are your ideas/ concepts/ discussion important to a contemporary audience or in a contemporary context?

Someone once said to me, I'm not interested in masculinity and I responded, well that's funny, cause its interested in you. The performance of masculinity is often considered synonymous with white dominant heteronormative maleness. We may not identify with it but it implicitly exerts a power over us because it is where power lies and the position from which much policy is written and implemented. I think my work is important because it attempts to open out this space, expose its power and influence.

How do you begin your studio practice? Where do you find inspiration?

I get a lot of inspiration from watching films and thinking about how we construct and maintain images. And I always like an idea to drive my inquiry. For instance I was interested in how CB (Citizens Band) radio could produce a particular kind of intimacy. Researching this idea meant setting up a CB radio platform in my studio and talking into it to find those spaces and to see how they could be developed.

How has your practice evolved over time?

One element of my practice was the construction of the character Renny Kodgers. Renny started out literally as a spoonerism of Kenny Rogers and as a satirical take on his persona and music. As my practise developed however, Renny became a more open critique of dominant tropes of masculinity and their pervasiveness in the mainstream media.

Who are your biggest influences?

I've always been a big fan of Vito Acconci, Carolee Schneeman and Mike Kelley's work. Mike Kelley once said that he wasn't a huge fan of punk because it operated simply on provocation. In contrast, within his work he wanted to seduce you in so that you liked it first before you started to hate it. I always think about this dynamic when I'm making work: seduction and repulsion.

Artist Website: <http://markshorter.com.au/>

Please be aware that some content on Mark Shorter's website contains nudity.

Workshop Summary

In this workshop participants will learn how writing and performance can be used artistically. This workshop explores the importance of diverse media and experimentation in contemporary art practice.

1. Introduction (20 mins): Mark will begin the workshop by presenting his body of work to the group, discussing the references he draws on and the artistic techniques he uses in his practice, including sculpture and performance.

2. Overview + Discussion (25 mins): The aim of this workshop is to explore the experimental possibilities of using simple tools and technologies to produce a text or script for a performance. Participants will be shown the scene from Jean Cocteau's *Orpheus* where Orpheus is listening to the radio in a car to pick up excerpts of poetry that are being spoken from the Underworld (death) by the poet Cegeste. Mark will lead discussion about how the radio has the capacity to produce a unique space and an alternate reality.

Key Questions:

- How does the radio hold the voice as an object?
- What role does our imagination play when we listen to the voice on the radio? What kind of images does it produce?
- How might we relate an idea of translation to listening to radio and engaging with the space it produces?

3. Demonstration (15 mins): Mark will demonstrate the CB (Citizens Band) and how it has the capacity to open up a space when it is spoken into. He will do a performative discussion that talks about how the CB is different from other communication devices and so has the potential to produce unique spaces.

Key questions:

- How does the two-way mode of CB frame a conversation?
- What happens when we separate the action of speaking from listening?
- How might the action of lifting the microphone and pressing the button affect the nature of the voice and its delivery?
- How might an intimacy be produced through this gesture? Does it relate to other intimate gestures that we perform?

4. Production Phase (1 hour):

Participants will write a letter to someone or something they loved and lost. The goal is to be authentic and vulnerable. Participants are not to reveal any personal identifiers so that the letters are anonymous letters of love.

Using two CB radios set up on opposite ends of the studio a participant will randomly select a letter and walk over to the opposite CB to read the letter out loud. The rest of the group will listen together at the other CB console.

Summary

- Introduction (30 mins): Introduction to the artists practice and techniques that will be used in the workshop.
- Discussion (15 mins): Group discussion in response to ideas and questions presented.
- Demonstration (15 Mins): Mark will demonstrate the capacity of CB radio to create unique space for dialogue.
- Production phase (1 Hour): Participants will write their love letters and perform them into the CB.

Materials List

2 x CB radios or a microphone

Paper

Pen

Goals and Objectives

- Through critical and creative re-thinking of the typical mediums of visual art (eg. painting, sculpture, photography) - students will learn about performance art and how to situate their works within the canon of art history.
- Students will develop evocative texts that link conceptual ideas and expressions to the performative outcomes they develop.
- Students will analyse the crossover of writing, visual art and performance.
- Students are encouraged to think critically and creatively about the visual arts principals, materials and composition in a performance artwork.

The activity aims to:

- Expand students' knowledge about art histories, concepts and techniques.
- Encourage imagination and enjoyment through engagement with technology or new media art.
- Teach students to express themselves through language and performance.
- Expand student's critical and creative thinking, using visual languages and art history.

Learning Activity

Discussion

- Discuss text and performance art. Who are significant artists that fit these categories? (Teachers think: Carolee Schneeman, Vito Acconci, Yoko Ono, Marina Abramović).
- How does Mark use the CB Radio as a vehicle for his artistic experiments? Do you think this is a good atmosphere for these experiments? Why? Why not?
- Talk about the use of endangered technologies in the arts, like CB radios? What role do art institutions play in preserving technologies?
- If there is no physical trace of an artwork or once the work is performed/completed, is it art? Can you find any other artworks that operate in a similar way? (Teachers think: ephemeral art, performance art, Lee Lozano's *Dropout Piece*, 1971-)

Concept Development

Students should begin by examining Mark Shorter's website and the history and cross over between visual art and performance. They should discuss significant historical and contemporary examples of artists that blur the lines between the two fields. Students should also research the radio or podcasts, and find an example or a radio segment, contemporary or historical, that they relate to.

Production

Participants will begin the process by writing a script or letter to a person or thing they have loved and lost. The goal is to be authentic and vulnerable. Participants are not to reveal any personal identifiers so that the letters are anonymous.

Using a CB radio, microphone or two cans on a string - if no radio is available, participant will randomly select a letter from the pile and read the letter out loud. The rest of the group will listen. After which the letters should be destroyed. Students should consider the artistic qualities of these acts.

Links to Curriculum

PRIMARY & SECONDARY

Present & Perform

View the location and exhibition of Mark Shorter's work. The students then plan their own exhibition of their artworks. They should consider the audience of the artworks and how they wish the audience to interpret the artwork.

Respond & Interpret

Level F – 6

Respond to Mark Shorter's artwork by identifying and describing technique and ideas. Consider how he makes his work. Students could also discuss the range of aesthetic styles throughout art history.

Level 7 – 10

Analyse and interpret Mark Shorter's artworks discussing ideas and viewpoints. Compare his work with works by other contemporary artists to identify characteristics and features of the works.

Explore & Express

Levels F – 6

Investigate the ways in which Mark Shorter explores ideas, techniques and materials in his artworks. How are these expressed?

Levels 7 – 10

Explore the practices of Mark Shorter. Through a discussion of Mark's use of found imagery and objects, discuss how he expresses his ideas and develops a particular style within his work. Discuss his work in terms of the themes that he explores. From this discussion students should develop their own artistic practice through the use of inspiration, materials, techniques and processes to develop their own artworks.

Visual Arts Practice

Levels F – 6

Based on the artworks of Mark Shorter students should explore materials, techniques, processes and visual conventions. They describe the use of these in the production of their artworks.

Levels 7 – 10

Think about the intentions that Mark Shorter has when he commences making his work. Discuss his artistic practice. Using the artworks of Mark as a starting point, explore materials, techniques, visual conventions and processes to develop an individual artistic intention.

VICTORIAN CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION (VCE)

Studio Arts

Unit 1 Area of Study 3: Interpreting art ideas and use of materials and techniques: The work of artists from different times and cultures is studied to gain a broader understanding of how artworks are conceived, produced and exhibited. Students discuss the way in which Mark has used materials and techniques, and interpreted ideas and sources of inspiration in producing his artworks.

Unit 2 Area of Study 2: Ideas and Styles in Artwork: Students develop an understanding of the use of other artists' works in the making of new artworks, which may include the ideas and issues associated with appropriation such as copyright and artists' moral rights. Discuss how Mark uses the character Renny Kodgers in his practice, a spoonerism of Kenny Rodgers. Why do you think he adopts this 'alterego'? What message or ideas does it allow him to convey that he couldn't as himself?

Unit 3 Area of Study 3: Artists and Studio Practices: In this area of study students focus on professional studio practices in relation to particular art forms. Students should investigate the ways in which artists have interpreted subject matter, influences, historical and cultural contexts, and communicated ideas and meaning in their artworks. Students should examine Mark's artist biography and above interview questions to understand the path of her professional development.

Unit 4 Area of Study 3: Art Industry Contexts

You will visit a variety of art exhibitions and examine the different methods and roles undertaken in the preparation and presentation of art to the public. Through his website examine several of Mark's exhibition outcomes. Discuss the presentation methods used and what they communicate to the viewer.

Glossary

Theatrical - of or relating to the theater or dramatic presentations: theatrical performances. Suggestive of the theater or of acting; artificial, pompous, spectacular, or extravagantly histrionic.

Self portraiture - a representation of an artist that is drawn, painted, photographed, or sculpted by that artist.

Costume - an outfit worn to create the appearance characteristic of a particular period, person, place, or thing.

Conceptual Art - sometimes simply called conceptualism, is art in which the concept or idea involved in the work take precedence over traditional aesthetic, technical, and material concerns.

Installation - Installation art can be either temporary or permanent. Installation artworks have been constructed with a particular site in mind, they are site specific.

Performance art - a performance presented to an audience within a fine art context. It is an interdisciplinary medium and can be predetermined or spontaneous, scripted or abstract. Performances also often incorporates audience members. Marina Abramovic is a prominent figure in performance art.

Narratives - a story or account of events, experiences, or the like, whether true or fictitious. When you are looking at an art work, the artist is presenting a narrative to you through visual language.

Landscape - The visual and aesthetic qualities of an area of land. Alternatively: the representation of these qualities, commonly though not exclusively represented through the media of painting and photography.

Gender - The alignment and characteristics associated with concepts of 'male' and 'female'. Definitions of gender operate on many frameworks including the social, personal, cultural, physical and psychological.

Ideologies - A system of ideals and ideas that form the basis for theory. Generally ideologies are rooted in social values that express beliefs of how systems should operate.

Quixotic - Extreme idealism beyond measures of practicality or realism. Often resulting in an extravagant or unpredictable manner.

Journeyman - A skilled worker who has completed an apprenticeship in a trade or craft.

Investigation - An attempt to discover and examine the truths and phenomena of a topic, to uncover the truth of what it is.

Grotesque - Repulsively ugly or distorted.

Guttural - Pertaining to the throat and stomach. Alternatively: Strange, unpleasant or disagreeable.

Visceral - Relating to a deep inward feeling in one's internal organs, rather than feeling in one's intellect or conscious mind.

Cerebral - Relating to the brain, conscious mind and thinking.

Masculinity - The qualities and characteristics associated with men and maleness.

Heteronormative - A worldview that assumes or promotes male-female relationships as the ideal, normal or preferred sexual orientation.

Maleness - A state of being that describes a sense of manhood and masculinity.

Spoonerism - An error or play on speech where the initial sounds of two words are swapped.

Satirical - The use of humor to expose or ridicule topical issues.

Critique - A critical analysis of something, exposing its underlying structures.

Pervasiveness - The quality of spreading widely or being present throughout an area or a group of people.

Anonymous - A lack of name, or personal identification so that authorship cannot be traced.

Missives - A long and detailed letter.

Assessment Rubric – Contemporary Artist Practice – Level 4

Visual Arts Level 4 Achievement Standard

Students investigate the ways in which the artist explores ideas, techniques and materials in their work and plan their own art works.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
<p><i>Students identify the artist use of materials and techniques.</i></p>	<p><i>Students describe artist's use of materials and techniques and representation of ideas.</i></p> <p><i>There is a link between the artist's work and the student's work.</i></p>	<p><i>Students identify the ideas that the artist has explored in their work. These ideas are reflected in the student work.</i></p>	<p><i>Students describe the artist has explored ideas, materials and techniques in their work. The student has used the same ideas in their own work.</i></p>	<p><i>Students evaluate how the artist has explored ideas, materials and techniques in their work. The student can link the use of ideas, materials and techniques in their own work and link it to the artists work.</i></p>

Organising element	Action	Insufficient Evidence	Quality criteria				
<i>Exploration of artist use of materials and techniques</i>	<i>Documentation of materials and techniques in relation to ideas.</i>	<i>Insufficient Evidence</i>	<i>Materials are identified in the artist work.</i>	<i>Materials and techniques are discussed in short sentences.</i>		<i>Materials and techniques are described and related to ideas in the work.</i>	<i>Materials and techniques are analysed in relation to ideas. The artist's exploration is described.</i>
<i>Student use of materials and techniques.</i>	<i>Exploration of materials and techniques in relation to artists work.</i>	<i>Insufficient Evidence</i>	<i>Use of materials and techniques are evident.</i>	<i>Materials and techniques are explored in drawings.</i>	<i>Materials and techniques are explored with annotated drawings that relate to the artist's ideas.</i>	<i>Materials and techniques are explored demonstrating the student's own personal ideas that relate to the artist's ideas. There are some annotations.</i>	<i>Materials and techniques are explored through annotated drawings demonstrating the students own personal ideas that relate to the artist's ideas.</i>
<i>Art work planning</i>	<i>Students plan their own artwork.</i>	<i>Insufficient Evidence</i>	<i>A plan is evident in the visual diary.</i>	<i>The artwork plan documents the use of materials and techniques and student ideas.</i>	<i>The artwork plan relates to the exploration of materials and ideas and the artist's work.</i>	<i>The artwork plan demonstrates an exploration of materials and techniques that relates to the artist's ideas and work.</i>	<i>The artwork plan demonstrates an exploration of materials and techniques that builds on previous work and expands on the ideas expressed by the artist.</i>

Learning continuum and Formative assessment rubric– Level 4 - 6

VISUAL DIARY – The purpose of a visual diary is to document the creative process from inspiration through to reflection to improve their visual arts practice.

<p>By the end of Level 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students plan and make artworks that are inspired by artworks they experience. They discuss and evaluate the art making processes, materials and techniques they use to express their ideas. <p>By the end of Level 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students explain how ideas are expressed in artworks they make and view. They describe the influences of artworks and practices places on their artmaking.

Curriculum Span:			
Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4
<p>Students at this stage have attempted with assistance to use their visual diary to plan, research and document. Annotations and drawings show some links to artists being explored. Some documentation or verbal discussion of visual conventions.</p>	<p>Students at this stage students have attempted with some assistance to use their visual diary to plan, research and document. Annotations and drawings show some links to artists being explored. Visual conventions and purpose are used to document their thinking.</p>	<p>Students at this stage have independently used their visual diary to plan, research and experiment artworks in their visual diary that express some ideas and show how they have been influenced by artists being explored. Visual conventions and purpose are used to document their thinking.</p>	<p>Students at this stage explicitly plan, research, annotate and experiment artworks in their visual diary that express a wide range of ideas and clearly show how they have been influenced by artists being explored. Students have generated their own viewpoint within their planning. Visual conventions and purpose are used to document their thinking.</p>

Organising element/s	Action		Quality criteria			
Preliminary planning	Skill – use of visual conventions	Insufficient evidence	Draws using media.	Draws using the media to create visual conventions,	Draws using techniques with the media to create visual conventions.	Draws demonstrating technical control of the media to create visual conventions.
	Concepts -expresses ideas, meaning and emotion based on stimulus	Insufficient evidence	Draws subject matter.	Draws ideas that respond to the stimulus.	Expresses ideas through drawings that build on the ideas in the stimulus material.	Expresses ideas through drawings that extend on the ideas in the stimulus material to present a personal viewpoint.
Annotations to explain	Annotation of materials and techniques for preliminary drawings and experimentation	Insufficient evidence	Annotates using key words.	Annotations identifying properties of materials, techniques and visual conventions	Annotations describe the properties of materials, technique and visual conventions	Annotations describe and evaluate the use of materials, techniques and visual conventions to communicate the meaning of the artwork.
	Annotation of relationship to artist/inspiration material. (Book, Artist, Inquiry, Object)	Insufficient evidence	Identifies the artist	Describes the visual elements within their own work and the artwork studied.	Relates observations to ideas by describing the visual conventions used in their own and the artist's and/or artwork.	Explains observational and conceptual ideas by comparing the visual conventions, concepts and/or style/period between their own and the artist's artwork.

Level 5/6 Media Arts

Learning Continuum & Formative Assessment Rubric

<p>Level 6 Achievement Standard</p> <p>By the end of Level 6, students explain how viewpoints, ideas and stories are shaped and portrayed in media artworks they make, share and view.</p>	<i>Curriculum Span:</i>			
	<i>Step 1</i>	<i>Step 2</i>	<i>Step 3</i>	<i>Step 4</i>
	<i>Students structure a media product.</i>	<i>Students develop an understanding of audience and purpose in a media product.</i>	<i>Students structure a media product demonstrating the relationship of audience and purpose.</i>	<i>Students use intent and structure in a media product for a specific audience and purpose.</i>

Organising element/s	Action		Quality criteria			
Planning of a media product with purpose for a targeted audience.	Selection of message with purpose.	<i>Insufficient evidence</i>	<i>Selects message</i>	<i>Selects message for a purpose</i>	<i>Selects message for a purpose and audience.</i>	<i>Selects a message with intention for a specific audience and purpose.</i>
	Communication of ideas through documentation and storyboard	<i>Insufficient evidence</i>	<i>Lists ideas in dot points.</i>	<i>Identifies ideas relating to message.</i>	<i>Describes ideas relating to message.</i>	<i>Expands on ideas relating to intention and message.</i>
	Development of story line and characters in animation.	<i>Insufficient evidence</i>	<i>Sequenced story line</i>	<i>Story line connects to purpose.</i>	<i>Story line connects to purpose and audience.</i>	<i>Story line explains specific purpose of the message to the intended audience.</i>

Formative Assessment Rubric – Contemporary Artist Practice – Level 6

<p>Visual Arts Level 6 Achievement Standard</p> <p>Students explain how ideas are expressed in artworks they make and view. They demonstrate the use of different techniques and processes in planning and making artworks.</p>
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Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5
<p><i>Students identify the artist use of materials and techniques.</i></p>	<p><i>Students describe artist's use of materials and techniques and representation of ideas.</i></p> <p><i>There is a link between the artist's work and the student's work.</i></p>	<p><i>Students identify the ideas that the artist has explored in their work. These ideas are reflected in the student work.</i></p>	<p><i>Students describe the artist has explored ideas, materials and techniques in their work. The student has used the same ideas in their own work.</i></p>	<p><i>Students evaluate how the artist has explored ideas, materials and techniques in their work. The student can link the use of ideas, materials and techniques in their own work and link it to the artists work.</i></p>

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