

# CONTEMPORARY ART ON THE ROAD WITH KAY ABUDE

GERTRAUDE  
CONTEMPORARY

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



## ABOUT THE ARTIST



Kay Abude is a multi-disciplinary artist and engages in many different forms of making including sculpture, large-scale installation, performance, photography and silk screen printing. Kay enjoys making work *about* work. The themes of labour and production, interrogating the value of artistic production, and drawing attention to labouring bodies by exhibiting and performing labour as the artwork itself are ongoing preoccupations in her research-oriented practice.

Kay Abude completed a Master of Fine Art (by research) at the Victorian College of the Arts and Music, The University of Melbourne in 2010. She has received numerous awards and grants including a 2020 Play King Foundation grant from the Australian Tapestry Workshop, a 2018 Vic Arts Grant from Creative Victoria and a 2018 HUME Arts Award. Kay was shortlisted for the prestigious 2014 Melbourne Prize for Urban Sculpture and was the recipient of the Professional Development Award and Civic Choice Award. She has also received a 2014 Vic Arts Grant, a 2013 Australia Council Art Start Grant and an Australian Post-Graduate Award in 2009 - 2010.

Kay's recent exhibitions include *WFH*, Station Gallery, Sydney, 2020; *Megalo International Print Prize*, Canberra, 2019; *Castlemaine State Festival*, Victoria, 2019; *National Anthem*, Buxton Contemporary, Melbourne, 2019; *Wangaratta Contemporary Textiles Award*, Victoria, 2019; *For Love or Money*, Town Hall Gallery, Hawthorn Arts Centre, Hawthorn, 2019; *Sunbury Cultural Commissions*, Sunbury Art Gallery, Victoria, 2019; Projects at the Auckland Art Fair, New Zealand, 2018; and *State of the Union*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, The University of Melbourne, Parkville, 2018.

### **What ideas/concepts do you base your artworks on?**

My artworks investigate notions of work and labour in an expanded sculptural practice by integrating labour activities into gallery settings. In recent artworks I have composed elements of textile, graphic design, performance and installation to exhibit the making and labour process as the artwork itself.

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

The topic of work and art as a form of work has fascinated me since art school and I continue to explore the nature of labour and it's economic, repetitive and somatic properties in my practice. Work and working connects us as people and communities, taking so much of our time that it comes to define our lives. I'm interested in how we find meaning in the work we are engaged in. My artworks invite viewers to reflect on their own work and the value of their own labour.

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

Over the years I have created and continue to build a work and labour research bank consisting of texts and imagery that explore these themes. I often draw from this resource for new projects but also reflect on my past projects and choose aspects from previous works that have been successful. All of these ideas are then carried into a new project and are fleshed out into new lines of inquiry.

### **Who are your biggest influences?**

Artists who explore the topic of work and labour in their practices such as Mika Rottenberg and Santiago Sierra; the working methodologies of Sally Smart; screen printing projects by Ciara Phillips; and the aesthetics of factories depicted in the work of Edward Burtynsky and Andreas Gursky.

### **Artist Website:**

[www.kayabude.com](http://www.kayabude.com)



---

## WORKSHOP SUMMARY

In this workshop participants will learn how to create two different types of stencils for silk screen printing and experiment with alternatives to traditional inks.

### **Introduction to materials and equipment: 5 minutes**

Kay will introduce her practice, explaining a few key projects she has worked on recently and why she's drawn to screen printing as a medium. Kay will also introduce a few artists who inspire her, and particularly for this workshop, Edward Ruscha, *Chocolate Room*, 1970 from the 35th Venice Biennale.

Participants will then be introduced to materials needed for silk screen printing, and tips and tricks of what to look for when buying screens and equipment.

### **Part 1 – Stencil making: 10 minutes**

Participants will be shown two ways to create stencils. The first, stencils are created with flat 2D objects arranged onto the screen and packaging tape applied directly onto the screen. This will create a print of the shape forms by allowing ink to pass through the screen around them. Second, shapes are cut from a piece of paper the same size as the silk screen. This will allow ink to fill the shape forms, when passed through the screen. These two methods allow participants to consider and play with both positive and negative space.

### **Part 2 – Printing stencils / work time : 55 minutes**

Kay will begin by talking participants through how best to set up their workspace for screen printing. Screen printing is a very physical process and involves using the entire body, to set up the station and pull the ink through the screen.

Kay will then demonstrate how best to set the stencil in relation to the screen, and the technique of contact printing the stencils onto paper and textiles. Participants will be encouraged and supported through the process of experimenting with equipment and materials during the activity. They will play with using both traditional water based inks and experiment using food alternatives.

Participants should compare the similarities and differences in the print, when applied to textiles versus paper. They should also consider the pros and cons of using traditional inks and food products? Discuss the appearance of both, is one more aesthetically pleasing? Discuss how time and the environment will effect the two different 'inks' over time. Is the more ephemeral nature of the food product appealing? Why?

### **Part 4 – Clean up process: 5 minutes**

Kay will demonstrate how to wash the silk screen to ensure the longevity and integrity of the screen, as well as good clean up habits after printing.

### **Part 5 – Group reflection: 15 minutes**

Participants meet as a group to discuss the activity and their learning experiences of the techniques and processes involved in screen printing. They can discuss some of the questions above, or reflect on how they could use these processes to convey their own ideas and concepts.

---

## EQUIPMENT LIST

- Screen
- Ink (made from food/confectionery)
- Spatula
- Yupo paper to make stencils
- Scissors
- Marker pen
- Cutting mat/plastic or cardboard
- Apron/art smock
- Solvol (abrasive soap)
- Squeegee
- Ink (water based screen printing ink)
- Brown packaging tape
- Stanley knife
- Lead pencil
- Ruler (preferably steel)
- Cotton rags
- Multi-purpose spray cleaner
- 5c pieces or similar sized washer

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Through critical and creative re-thinking of the typical mediums of visual art - students will learn how to experiment with different media, materials and techniques.
- Students will practice and develop processes for creating without specific visual outcomes in mind.
- Students will develop skills in creative and conceptual thinking towards art making and material.
- Students are encouraged to play with shape, form, texture, colour and tone.

### **The activity aims to:**

- Expand students' knowledge about materials, techniques and creative practices.
  - Encourage imagination and enjoyment through engagement with art making.
  - Teach students to express themselves through play with new and unusual materials (food) and techniques.
  - Expand students' critical and creative thinking, using visual languages and materials to express their ideas.
- 

## LEARNING ACTIVITY

### **Discussion**

- Discuss screen printing and the ways this process is used by individuals to express who they are, and their ideas. Who are some artists who are famous for using this technique? (Teachers think: Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein, Richard Hamilton).
- Look at Kay's work on her website. What art elements and principals can you identify? How prevalent is pattern and repetition in her screen printing?
- How does Kay use screen printing in her practice? Look at examples of Kay's work on her website. What different applications of printing can you identify? How has Kay transformed her art by making wearable clothes from her prints? Do you think the messages she conveys work as wearable art? Or are they stronger as a banner or sculpture?
- Talk about the use of screen printing in the arts. Look at the history and crossover of this traditionally commercial technique and the visual arts. Who are some artists that use screen printing in their practice? Can you find any contemporary screen printing artists?
- Look at the location and installation methods in an exhibition of Kay's work. How has Kay installed her work/s? Do you think this is an effective way to share them? Why? Why not? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this display technique? Do they help to communicate or alter the meaning of the work?

### **Concept Development**

Students should begin by examining Kay's works and exhibitions, her use of materials and the history of screen printing practice. They should discuss significant artists that have used this technique or contemporary artists that utilise or are inspired by it. Students should research Edward Ruscha, *Chocolate Room*, 1970 from the 35th Venice Biennale, 1970 and look at the process and technique Ruscha used. Do you think the room would have smelt sweet? What changes do you think would have occurred to the chocolate prints throughout the duration of the exhibition?

## Production

Teachers should begin by introducing their students to the tools and equipment needed for screen printing. Students should take care with their screens not to scratch or cut them, as this would impact the quality of the print.

Students should examine printing ink and its consistency, and compare this to different types of food products that can be used as alternatives: melted chocolate, strawberry jam, ice cream topping, tomato sauce or mustard. What other food products or non-art materials could you use?

Follow Kay's instructions in the workshop summary above, taking time to set up your station and prep all your materials. Students should create a few different stencils to work with and test out different techniques. Once students are happy with their stencils, they can experiment with both printing inks and food products, making sure to wash the screen thoroughly between different products and ink colours. It may be best for students to share stations. e.g. set up a tomato sauce station, a blue ink station and a chocolate sauce station that students can rotate through.

Participants meet as a group to discuss the activity and their learning experiences of the techniques and processes involved in screen printing. They can discuss some of the questions above, or reflect on how they could use these processes to convey their own ideas and concepts.



Image | Kay Abude, *Love Thy Labour*, installation view at Bus Projects, 2017.  
Photo: Christo Crocker. Image courtesy of Bus Projects

## LINKS TO CURRICULUM

### PRIMARY & SECONDARY

#### **Present & Perform**

View the location and exhibition of Kay's work. Students then plan an exhibition of their own artworks. They should consider the audience of the artworks and how they wish the audience to interpret the artwork. They should decide how they can/should display their work and explain why they have chosen that particular display method.

#### **Respond & Interpret**

Level F – 6

Respond to Kay's artwork by identifying and describing technique and ideas. Consider how she makes her work. Students could also discuss screen printing and/ or use of food and cooking practices by artists throughout history. Use the list of artists on the next page, as a starting point.

Level 7 – 10

Analyse and interpret Kay's artworks discussing ideas and viewpoints. Compare her 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 Kay explores ideas, techniques and materials in her artworks. How are these expressed?

Levels 7 – 10

Explore Kay's art practice. Through a discussion of her use of process and materials discuss how she expresses her ideas and develops a particular style within her work. Discuss her work in terms of the themes that she explores. From this discussion students should develop their own ideas through the use of inspiration, materials, techniques and processes to develop their own artworks.

#### **Visual Arts Practice**

Levels F – 6

Based on Kay's artworks 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 Kay has when she commences making her work, discuss her artistic practice. Using the artworks of Kay's 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 James has used materials and techniques, cultural and craft practices and interpreted ideas and sources of inspiration in producing her artworks.

#### **Unit 2 Area of Study 2: Exploration of Studio Practice and Development of Artworks**

Students focus on developing artworks through an individual studio process based on visual research and inquiry. Using this workshop as a catalyst for self experimentation and play with media, students develop their own aesthetic style.

#### **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 Kay's artist biography to understand the path of her professional development, places and people she has exhibited alongside or collaborated with.

#### **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. Examine one or two Kay's exhibition outcomes. Discuss the presentation methods she has used and what they communicate to the viewer.

## RELATED ARTISTS



### Edward Ruscha (b. 1937)

Edward Ruscha is an American artist associated with the Pop Art movement. *Chocolate Room*, 1970 is his only installation to date, otherwise working in print. This installation is a room lined with 360 shingled\* sheets of paper silk screened with chocolate. During this time, he worked with organic materials like cherry juice or baked beans instead of traditional inks. These materials stimulated the senses, challenging traditional modes of art.

\* overlapping tiles, like on a roof.



### Rirkrit Tiravanija (b. 1961)

Rirkrit Tiravanija is a Thai contemporary artist whose practice grew out of the playful aesthetics of Fluxus, which was more focused on the process of art than the final product. In *Untitled (Free)*, 1992, Tiravanija moved the entire contents of the gallery's back rooms into the main gallery, bringing the business-side of art and the gallery space to the forefront. By doing so, he brings the labour of art to the forefront.



### Kara Walker (b. 1969)

*A Subtlety (The Marvelous Sugar Baby)*, 2014 is an installation by Walker of a sugar-coated 35-foot tall female sphinx representing the body of a black woman. This structure represents the conflicted history of the sugar trade. It is built in the back of a warehouse that operated in the late 19th century that Domino once used for storing raw sugar cane as it arrived from boats from the Caribbean for refinements and packaging. Sugar was once a luxury but due largely to slave labour became more widely available.



### Anita Cummins

Anita Cummins is an emerging artist from Melbourne who combines a variety of media including sculpture, video and installation. In *feelings*, 2018, a large installation made of crushed Cheezels and *I got out of bed today*, 2018, a collage made out of Cheezels boxes, the artist transforms food snacks into nostalgic works. The Cheezels in *feelings* are reminiscent of pigment, and trigger feelings of hunger and nostalgia.



### James Tylor (b. 1986)

James Tylor is an Australian multi-disciplinary contemporary artist, born in Mildura, Victoria. *Mai: Kaurua Contemporary Food*, 2018 is a food based project by Tylor that explores Australian food, history and culture. The project involves developing new Australian cuisines by using Indigenous and non indigenous foods to tell Australia's history.



### Nabilah Nordin (b. 1991)

Nabilah Nordin is a Singaporean Australian Sculptor who creates sculptural objects and installations with food and food materials. She practices unlearning 'correct' methods and techniques of making, and amplifies sculptural scraps and cut offs in her work. From this "wonky craftsmanship" emerges, investigating, instead, the property of materials.





Contemporary Art on the Road is a unique professional development program that provides access to artists and art educators from some of Melbourne's leading art institutions: Gertrude Contemporary, Monash University Museum of Art and the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. This resource was created to introduce teachers to hands-on, expertly designed strategies and resources for teaching contemporary art in their classroom.

Contemporary Art on the Road is funded by the Department of Education and Training Victoria (DET) through the Strategic Partnerships Program (SPP) and partnered with the following organisations:



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.