

SIFT CORE

AN EXHIBITION CURATED BY MICHEAL DO
in conjunction with Casula Powerhouse Arts
Centre and toured by Museums and Galleries of
NSW

Secondary Education Kit



Robert Morris

Untitled 1969

felt

284.0 h x 363.2 w x 111.8 d cm

Purchased 1975

Accession No: NGA 75.152

© Robert Morris/ARS, New York. Licensed by VISCOPY, Sydney

ABOUT

This education kit is for secondary school students. It contains brief biographies and essays relating to the practice of selected artists from the exhibition. There are curriculum based exercises and activities for Stages 4-6 students.

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***Soft Core* is an exhibition curated by Micheal Do, in conjunction with Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre and toured by Museums & Galleries of NSW**

***Soft Core* will be visiting these venues:**

Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery (NSW) 3 Feb - 12 Mar 2017
Hawkesbury Regional Gallery (NSW) 30 Mar - 14 May 2017
Bathurst Regional Art Gallery (NSW) 9 Jun - 30 Jul 2017
Cowra Regional Art Gallery (NSW) 26 Aug - 8 Oct 2017
Shoalhaven Arts Centre (NSW) 4 Nov - 13 Jan 2018
Shepparton Art Museum (VIC) 27 Jan - 18 Mar 2018
Horsham Regional Art Gallery (VIC) 19 May - 22 Jul 2018
Wagga Wagga Art Gallery (NSW) 11 Aug - 28 Oct 2018
Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery (QLD) 10 Nov 2018 - 21 Jan 2019
Caboolture Regional Art Gallery (QLD) 15 Feb - 18 Apr 2019
Perc Tucker Regional Gallery (QLD) 6 Sep - 3 Nov 2019

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Lydia Benglis

Untitled (Polly's pie II) 1968

pigmented polyurethane foam

15.2 h x 139.7 w x 83.8 d cm

Courtesy of the artist and Cheim & Read, New York

© Lynda Benglis. Licensed by VAGA & VISCOPY, Australia

INTRODUCTION

Hard Core is a term used to describe a fast and furious musical genre that reacts against the structure of traditional musical composition. It is symbolic of anti-establishment resistance, a desire for the new and an aversion to tradition. *Soft Core* is an exhibition that focuses on soft sculpture within contemporary art practice. Although it is not always loud, fast and furious in its delivery, the establishment of soft sculpture within modern and contemporary art practice did emerge as a reaction to the traditional modes of creating sculpture and the established Modern norms of art practice.

Until the beginning of the 20th Century, sculpture was primarily concerned with replicating the human figure in hard materials such as bronze and marble. Infamous examples are works from the Renaissance, like Michelangelo's David (1501 – 04) and works by Modernist artists such as Henry Moore (1898 – 1986) or Pablo Picasso (1881 – 1973) who investigated abstraction through sculpture. The form that these stone and heavy metal sculptures take could be cast from a mould, welded, or crafted with a hammer and chisel. For centuries this was the dominant form of sculptural practice, but in the early part of the 20th Century artists began experimenting with different art making processes and materials. In 1917 Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, a mass produced urinal, introduced the notion of the "readymade" within modern art and Duchamp and the other **Dadaists'** use of absurdity began to open a new era of sculptural possibilities.

Later, in the middle of the 20th century, against the backdrop of the hard edge Minimalist movement, the variety of sculptural materials that we see in this exhibition began to assert themselves within the contemporary art practice of the time. Typically, minimalist works were hard-edged, big, heavy and industrial and were concerned with the purity of form and material. As a reaction to this newly established norm within sculpture, artists began to look toward other material possibilities, both commercial and domestic, and how they could be used within their practice. The middle of the 20th Century saw numerous innovations with petrochemicals; materials like resin, fibreglass and other plastics, offered new possibilities to art making and were readily available.



Claes Oldenburg

Ice bag - scale B 1971

plastic, textile, electric motor yellow nylon fabric, moulded coloured synthetic polymer, muslin lining, self adhesive vylene tape, silver lacquer, anodised parts, steel hydraulic mechanism, zipper

Edition: edition of 25 | variable 107.0 h 122.5 diameter cm

Purchased 1975 | Accession No: NGA 75.602

© Claes Oldenburg and Coosje Van Bruggen

These alternative materials created the opportunity for a new sculptural language to begin developing. A sculpture did not have to stand tall, but could be low lying like *Untitled (Polly's pie II)* (1968) (image 2) by Lynda Benglis, a work made from latex that has been poured onto the ground and appears like a painterly gesture that has slipped off its canvas. A sculpture did not need to be ridged; it could use gravity to create form like Robert Morris' series of felt works, like *Untitled* (1969) (image 1), that would droop and bend under their own weight. A sculpture did not need to be slick but, like Eva Hesse's *Contingent* (1969), it could show signs of fragility and the ephemeral nature of life. And a sculpture did not have to stand still. Pop artist Claes Oldenburg's *Ice bag - scale B* (1971) (image 3) is a larger than life ice pack that is motorised to expand and retract as it would when used and held in the human hand.

Because artists chose to optimise the potential of new materials and to react against established modes of art-making the language of sculpture expanded to include anything- Soft Core was Hard Core. There was a new repertoire of materials and a new set of rules for artists to choose from. This shift highlighted the importance of the tactile encounter to the viewer's experience and therefore the importance of material to the concept of the artwork. This continues in contemporary practice today and is one of the reasons that we see an artist like Patricia Piccinini use silicone to replicate skin to create an uneasy portrayal of a genetically modified human form. Kathy Temin's use of soft fur around a monument begs the viewer to immerse themselves within the symbol of grief rather than to distance themselves from it. Or Tony Ouerler, who combines video projections with bulbous forms to create a surreal narrative that is attached to reality but really offers a confronting alternative.

The curatorial link in this exhibition is the notion of "soft." These and all of the other works in the exhibition use the idea of softness in different ways in their work, but they all use that softness to deliver potent messages around contemporary themes. They are anti-establishment and question perception and societal norms. In short, "Soft "is to visual art practice what Hard Core is to music.



Tully Moore

2015

oil on clay & board, plaster, digital print, brass and cotton embroidery.

© Tully Moore

TULLY MOORE

“Like a show bag for the masses!” This quote is by the artist Tully Moore as he tries to describe his work that was featured in the exhibition *Melbourne Now* at the NGV in 2014. It is lifted from a published conversation with fellow Melbourne artist Tony Garafalakis, also in 2014. A show bag is big, bright and fun. It is designed to satisfy the owner (albeit usually for a short time) and gives merchandise to remember an event. For *Soft Core*, Moore’s five artworks *Pork Barreler*, *The Drunk*, *Rodeo*, *Loki* and *The Artist* (2016) appear big, bright and fun, but perhaps with a little serve of skepticism on the side.

Moore’s collection of five works in *Soft Core* sit against the wall in human size proportions and with human-like features, arranged like a criminal line-up or children in a school photo. These works together look like Ronald McDonald, The Hamburglar and Grimace have been wrapped up in psychedelic tie-dye, chewed up and spat out and two of Moore’s “characters” even have a pair of oversized clown shoes resting on the ground beneath. On approach you almost want to hold out a hand to shake and introduce yourself to each colorful character that you meet - *Loki* and *The Drunk* have hands. The works could be described as portraits. They are painted on board with the addition of collage elements, like a pink iced donut made of plaster for a nose, or hand painted pieces of MDF that sit on the surface like a mosaic that is slowly being pulled apart. These MDF additions are sometimes shards of color, but in some instances are delicately delivered **trompe l’œil** of bulbous sausage or bacon or in the case of *The Artist* the familiar image of the **cliché** tortured male artist (Jackson Pollock). The “face” of each work is merely the impression of a face. It looks like it has been delivered to the surface quickly just as a street artist would stealthily and efficiently deliver a message illegally upon a wall. Perhaps the artist wants to replicate this urban practice, but I believe he also wants to highlight how the glimpses of these nameless markings are **subconsciously** viewed while trudging through daily routines and how these glimpses begin to compile in our brains as a visual catalogue.

1 Tully Moore in conversation with Tony Garafalakis, Tully Moore & Tony Garifalakis, *Melbourne Now* NGV Blog, 19 March 2014.



Tully Moore
Rodeo 2015
 oil on clay & board, plaster, digital print, brass and cotton
 embroidery.
 © Tully Moore

This catalogue of imagery is further tweaked by the iconic imagery that Moore uses and its dual meanings. For example, Pork Barreler depicts a pig's face surrounded by a variety of pork products, several sausages connect to depict a bow tie. Pork Barreler is a slang term used to describe politicians who serve their own interests and works alongside the clichéd imagery of the over indulged policy maker.

Each work is branded with Tully Moore's monogram, TM. This also is a visual key that is viewed numerous times on a daily basis as it is seen transcribed next to the branding of everything from T-shirts to fast food wrappers. Through the happy coincidence of shared initials, the monogram is used cleverly and humorously by the artist to reference **consumerism** through the creation of his own logo. This simultaneously critiques the very system and protections put in place to individualize multinational organisations.

Tully Moore collects imagery. With a discerning eye, he moves throughout his daily life keenly aware of the visual buffet that he is digesting, while most seem to swallow without looking at what's being served. Moore is then able to regurgitate this collection of imagery to deliver a colorful yet concise insight into the puppeteers that define that visual landscape for profit - a practice that is largely left un-questioned by those who consume it.



Tully Moore
 2015
 oil on clay & board, plaster, digital print, brass and cotton
 embroidery.
 © Tully Moore

QUESTIONS : YR 7 & 8

Using the subjective and cultural framework discuss the imagery and visual cues that the artist chooses to use. Invite the students to investigate and discuss the imagery that is around them.

QUESTIONS : YR 9 & 10

Using the conceptual framework discuss how this work might relate to past artists and artworks, like the Pop Art movement. Consider examples like Claes Oldenburg, Jasper Johns and contemporary examples like Paul McCarthy and Jeff Koons.

QUESTIONS : YR 11 & 12

Using the structural and cultural framework discuss the symbolism within Moore's work and its potential reading in the current political climate.

What is a pork barreler? Is this an issue in contemporary politics?

What is an artist? How are artists depicted in the media/movies/television? Is this true to life?

ACTIVITY

With drawing/painting/collage ask students to create their own portrait, or a portrait of a friend. Ask them to choose objects and logos that represent aspects of their personality and combine them in one work to create a personality portrait.



Tony Ousler
Vision Tracey Doll 1994
Fabric doll, wooden stand, Pico data player
430 h x 130 w x 90 mm
© Tony Ousler

TONY OUSLER

Tony Oursler is a New York-based multidisciplinary artist whose mediums include video, sculpture, installation, performance and painting. He is fascinated by the psychological effects of mass media on people and their relationships with one another, and this can be seen in his practice in which he projects video onto three-dimensional objects such as fiberglass sculptures and stuffed heads.

Oursler's multimedia and audiovisual practice of projecting on to different materials and spaces is reflective of the alienation and isolation experienced by individuals in a culture that is driven by technology. While Oursler's work deals with the consequences of the moving image, as well as the idea of identity production (particularly in cyberspace), there is often humour in the work, as evidenced by the cartoonish, liquid-like forms his sculptures take. Oursler is preoccupied with the face as the locus for communication and meaning, and he distorts it and breaks it up, referencing Cubist work. The effect is one that is disorientating, but also forces the viewer to become active participants with the work, at once trying to read the various facial features and listen intently to what is physically being said.

This sense of urgency is repeated in Oursler's *Vision Tracey Doll (1994)*. Oursler's dolls speak, convey a series of facial expressions, and make noises to capture various mental states. The artist has referred to the characters in his work as "tortured and struggling, living in existential spaces", and as such, the characters undergo and exhibit a number of strong emotional scenarios, experiencing everything from laughter to crying. Drawing on Oursler's interest in political **effigies**, DIY culture, and the tension between science and spiritualism, these small voodoo-like dolls have human faces projected on to them, making them objects injected with real human emotions that enable the viewer to engage with the "psycho-dramatic grammar" of the moving image. Oursler's sculptures shake the audience from being complacent observers of his work to ones that cannot help but interact, if not for their own horrified amusement.



Tony Ousler
Spectar 2006
fibreglass form, dvd, dvd player, projector
1800 x 800mm dia
© Tony Ousler

QUESTIONS : YR 7 & 8

Discuss how you experience Vision Tracey Doll where the face is presented as a whole attached to the body yet separate from it. How does this make you feel?

QUESTIONS : YR 9 & 10

Consider the statement “the medium is the message”. Using the Structural and Cultural frames, how does Oursler manipulate various artistic mediums to convey ideas about mass media and its impact on people?

QUESTIONS : YR 11 & 12

According to Oursler, “my early idea of what could be art for my generation was an exploded TV.” Using the Postmodern and Structural frames, analyse this statement in relation to Oursler’s approach to art and sculpture. What is different or unusual about his use of materials and subject matter?

Working individually or in groups have students take their picture. Then use a distortion app on a smartphone or other device, or work with Photoshop on a computer to distort their image.

Ask students to create at least three images that each convey different emotions.

Discuss what it is about each image that influences emotion.



Patricia Piccinini
A Deeply Held Breath 2009
bronze
38 x 55 x 54 cm
© Patricia Piccinini

PATRICIA PICCININI

Patricia Piccinini is a contemporary Australian artist who works across a range of media including, drawing, photography, sculpture and video. As an artist, Piccinini's practice crosses the boundaries between animals, humans and other biologically engineered species, often blurring the lines between the real, imaginary and scientific.

Piccinini likes to use video and moving images within her work, manipulating the truth of video, such as in *The Gathering* (2007). By using everyday objects, she coaxes us into a false sense of security. This video is set in a middle class suburban home: empty rooms are darkly lit creating a sense of unease in the audience. In different scenes, Piccinini highlights and focuses on small everyday details within the house such as light fittings and curtains. By focusing on these aspects of everyday life, Piccinini creates uncertainty and suspense. The video then reveals a young girl asleep on a carpeted floor in one of the rooms. Slowly, seven small marsupials emerge from behind the curtain and under the beds to surround her. The creatures look frightening yet comforting. The video work finishes with a vignette focusing on Indian wall paper decorations and a scene of a man and woman which seems unrelated to the strange dream-like events that preceded it, provoking the viewer to question the true course of events.

Another artwork by Piccinini that explores the duality between science and art is *The Young Family* (2002). The artist draws her inspiration for this work from scientists' plans to begin breeding genetically-modified pigs to provide a replacement for organs and insulin producing cells for humans, thus helping alleviate the shortage of human organs needed for transplants and treating diabetes. The artist is not casting a judgement on such practices, but rather raises questions regarding the ethical implications of creating a new life purely to serve humans. The work blurs the distinction between emotion and rationality for the viewer as it elicits a range of complex issues and dilemmas that would arise if this became real life, not just science fiction.



Patricia Piccinini

Foundling 2008

silicone, human hair, polyester, nylon, wool, glass, plastic

37 x 66 x 41 cm

© Patricia Piccinini

The Young Family (2002) has been made by 'mixing' together two or more genetically different animals. The mother is shown suckling two babies. She has a vacant, exhausted expression on her face. Her 'pups' pose like newborn babies, lying on their backs, playing with their toes. Despite the fact that these are creatures imagined by the artist, the artwork looks very real.

Piccinini is influenced by the scientific world, pop culture and art history. She likes to draw upon the mystery and mystique behind science, and investigate the duality between science and art. According to the artist herself,

"I think my creatures are actually more mythological than scientific. They are chimeras that I construct in order to tell stories that explain the world that I live in but cannot totally understand or control. Like most myths they are often cautionary tales, but they are also often celebrations of these extraordinary beasts."

Within her artist practice, Piccinini is constantly exploring the concepts between the natural world and the new age scientific world.



Patricia Piccinini
Ghost 2012
silicone, fibreglass, human hair
70 x 54 x 40 cm
© Patricia Piccinini



Patricia Piccinini
The Gathering 2007
DVD, 16:9 PAL, Stereo
3 minute loop
© Patricia Piccinini

QUESTIONS : YR 9 & 10

Use the Subjective Frame to analyse and discuss the artist's intention with the artwork *The Young Family* (2002).

QUESTIONS : YR 11 & 12

Referencing Piccinini's artistic practice, discuss her influences in the development and creation of her artworks. Give specific examples.

ACTIVITY

Design your own hybrid animal/ human creature.

Consider and discuss contemporary examples within the science community that could be considered to blur ethical boundaries. For example: the proposal to infect carp with the herpes virus or to introduce genetically modified sterile mosquitos into mosquito populations in South East Asia in the effort to stamp out dengue fever, or the option to select the genetic make-up of a child before it is conceived.

Ask students to use this information to question and critique opinion by creating their own hybrid forms. This could be done by stuffing stockings and sewing them together, or with a malleable material like clay or plasticine.



Patricia Piccinini
The Young Family 2002
silicone, polyurethane, leather, plywood, human hair
80 x 150 x 110cm
© Patricia Piccinini



Kathy Temin
Pet Tomb: Roger 2014
synthetic fur, MDF and filling
220 x 95 x 95 cm
© Kathy Temin

KATHY TEMIN

Kathy Temin is a Melbourne-based artist and sculptor. She is best known for her use of synthetic fur to convey the interplay between the fluffy, emotional content of the soft toy image and the sentimental, sometimes melancholic, response that it evokes.

Temin is largely interested in the private-public dialogue surrounding memorials and other markers of memory. Her father was a **Holocaust** survivor who had been detained at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, and when Temin revisited the site and others like it years later, she became interested in how certain monuments psychologically made the audience feel small. The artist was able to translate the same sentiment to her large-scale sculptures, which can often be immersive and overwhelming, but always elicit a sense of quiet reverence and contemplation.

The 70s orange faux fur of Temin's *Pet Cemetery (2014)* series is immediately **nostalgic**. Weaving through the variously shaped works such as the monumental tower that is *Pet Tomb: Ebeneza (2014)*, as opposed to the smaller, box-like *Pet Tomb: Nikki (2014)* is like traversing through a physical timeline, a personal history that commemorates the life and loss of beloved family pets. At the same time, however, we are caught off guard by the works' absurd playfulness: these structures lack the cold, hard lines of a traditional tomb. Rather, they are pouchy and squishy, but ultimately, inviting. Temin has often referred to her own materials and practice as reflecting optimism in the face of adversity, and this is evident in works such as *Pet Tomb: Roger (2014)*, which combine 'harder' materials of concrete and MDF board, but are nonetheless dwarfed by the pervading tactile softness.



Kathy Temin
Purple Monochrome 2015
synthetic fur, steel, synthetic filling
95 x 62 x 32 cm
© Kathy Temin

The manipulation of space between and amongst sculptures is central to how the audience experience Temin's work. Sculptures that are densely packed together require the audience to walk around them, highlighting the solemnity that is not unlike that felt when walking through a cemetery. Others invite the viewer to enter into a provocative, other-worldly environment. Temin's fascination with monuments as objects that assign public space for private thought extends to include memorial gardens, sites associated with decay and renewal. The dark, rich velvet-like appearance of the cushy *Purple Garden (2015)*, *Purple Tree (2015)* and *Purple Monochrome (2015)* evoke the sadness that comes from mourning, but the plush nature of synthetic fur also alludes to comfort and refuge.

Through minimal shapes that reference the soft pop sculptures of artists such as Claes Oldenburg, and the personal and domestic nature of her artistic practice (Temin is self-taught in pattern-making and sewing), Temin illustrates and reclaims the relationship between the private and public; the softness of memory and the hard realities of grief.



Kathy Temin
Pet Tomb: Ebeneza 2014
synthetic fur, MDF and filling
220 x 95 x 95 cm
© Kathy Temin

QUESTIONS : YR 7 & 8

Consider the artist's use of synthetic fur and the associations we make with this material. Using the Structural and Subjective Frames, explore how this adds to the meaning of the work in relation to ideas of memory. What other materials could Temin have used, and how would these change the meaning behind the work?

QUESTIONS : YR 9 & 10

Using the Postmodern and Structural frames, discuss how Temin's works function as markers of memory. How successful are they as memorial pieces? What does this say about our ideas surrounding the commemoration of human loss?

QUESTIONS : YR 11 & 12

Temin has long been interested in the perplexity of the German phrase "*arbeit macht frei*" ("work makes you free"), a slogan at the entrance to the Auschwitz Nazi concentration camp. Use the Structural, Postmodern and Cultural frames to discuss this phrase in relation to Temin's artistic practice and cultural heritage. How does Temin seek to reclaim this statement?

Working individually or in groups have students choose two articles from a newspaper/online publisher.

- One should be a serious story
- One should be a light-hearted/feel good story

Ask students to make a monument style artwork in relation to each story and choose hard/heavy materials for the light-hearted story, like plaster, metal, concrete, heavy cardboard. And for the serious story they should use light/soft materials like, feathers, plastic bags, balloons etc.



Kathy Temin
Purple Garden 2015
synthetic fur, steel, synthetic filling
194 x 60 x 60 cm
© Kathy Temin

GLOSSARY

Dadaist (Dada)

the style and techniques of a group of artists and writers of the early 20th century who exploited the accidental in their work.

Ephemeral

lasting a very short time; short-lived; transitory.

Effigy

a representation or image usually sculptured.

Holocaust (The)

the mass murder of Jews and members of many other ethnic, social, and political groups in continental Europe between 1940 and 1945 by the Nazi regime.

Nostalgic

to experience nostalgia, a sentimental longing for a previous, time, place or event.

Vignette

a decorative design or small illustration used on the title page of a book or at the beginning or end of a chapter.

Trompe l'oeil

a visual deception, especially in paintings, in which objects are rendered in extremely fine detail emphasizing the illusion of tactile and spatial qualities.

Cliché

anything that has become trite or commonplace through overuse.

Subconsciously

existing or operating in the mind beneath or beyond consciousness.

Consumerism

the concept that an ever-expanding consumption of goods is advantageous to the economy.

Profiteer

a person who seeks or exacts exorbitant profits.

The definitions in this glossary were sourced from dictionary.com.