



These stories
will be different

ZANNY BEGG

Mediation Handbook



About this handbook:

This resource is designed to assist tour venues, front-of-house staff, educators and volunteers to navigate the themes, ideas and issues in *Zanny Begg | These Stories Will be Different*.

Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) has been researching and providing training on the practices of Mediation (sometimes referred to as Cultural Mediation) with the aim to equip gallery and museum staff with the tools to implement this engagement strategy across the sector. Mediation is about deepening the engagement of audiences at a peer-to-peer level through personal opinions being shared, knowledge being discussed, and visitors being given the freedom to arrive at their own interpretations. You can read more about Mediation practice [here](#).

Volunteer and front-of-house staff are often the first people confronted with a wide range of questions from audiences. Outreach staff and educators engage their communities through public programming, enabling safe spaces for discussion, creativity and enquiry for all visitors.

Through this handbook, M&G NSW aims to help gallery staff develop an inclusive and culturally sensitive vocabulary to talk about the themes and ideas in *These Stories Will be Different* to the local community, to simply provide fodder for conversation, and allow meaningful connections, stories, experiences and ideas to lead interactions between the exhibition, the gallery, and its public.

This handbook is designed to be used as a reference point throughout the exhibition presentation at your venue as well as provide some deeper background and starting points for conversation and engagement.

This handbook was developed by M&G NSW in partnership with UNSW Galleries and Zanny Begg. The Glossary was prepared by Dr. Megan R. Fizell, a Sydney-based art historian, writer, and emerging curator with an interest in sensory art. Fizell recently completed her PhD at UNSW where she studied modern and contemporary art employing edible materials. Her research focuses on the sensory and affective experiences of food art within broader sociocultural frameworks.

Left: Zanny Begg, *The City of Ladies* (still) 2017. Co-directed with Elise McLeod. Image courtesy of the artist.



The Tour:

Zanny Begg | These Stories Will be Different is curated by UNSW Galleries; bringing together the artist's most significant video installations, including *City of Ladies* (with Elise McLeod) 2017, *The Beehive* 2018 and *Stories of Kannagi* 2019.

Begg was born in 1972 in Melbourne and now lives in Bulli, on Dharawal land on the south coast of New South Wales. She uses film, drawing and installation to explore hidden and contested histories, and examines different ways in which we can live and exist in the world.

These Stories Will be Different brings together a fascinating series of works that reimagine a medieval feminist utopia, probe the unsolved murder of a high-profile anti-gentrification campaigner and explore the connections between love, loss, and language in migrant communities in Australia. The videos tell stories, but they also challenge the conventions of storytelling. Begg's work invites you to see the world differently by drawing on ancient literary traditions, non-

linear timeframes, and computer-generated randomisation.

Zanny Begg:

Zanny Begg is an award-winning artist and filmmaker whose work has been exhibited widely in Australia. She was the winner of the 66th Blake Prize Established Artist Residency in 2021, and one of six artists selected for the ACCA Open commission in 2020. She was winner of the inaugural 2018 ACMI + Artbank Commission, the recipient of the Incinerator Art Award and Terrance and Lynnette Fern Cite Residency, Paris in 2016, and was selected by Werner Herzog to attend the Rogue Film School in 2015. Begg has a PhD in Art Theory from UNSW and is on the Artist Advisory Board for the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Begg's work is held in several collections, including Campbelltown Arts Centre; Cruthers Collections of Women's Art, Perth; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin; and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. *Above left: Zanny Begg, The Beehive, UNSW Galleries, Photo: Steven Siewert, 2019*

Museums & Galleries Of NSW:

Museums & Galleries of NSW runs the largest regional touring program in NSW and is committed to touring exhibitions of contemporary visual art to communities throughout Australia. In the last three years, M&G NSW has reached half a million people through 16 exhibitions of contemporary art that toured to 51 separate galleries across six States and Territories. These exhibitions have presented the work of 410 living artists, primarily to regional audiences,

nationwide. Our program features the leading names in Australian contemporary art including: Tracey Moffatt, Angelica Mesiti, Richard Bell, Louise Weaver, David Griggs, Patricia Piccinini, Soda Jerk among others.

Touring Partner:

UNSW Galleries brings together the work of leading Australian and international practitioners, curators and writers working in the fields of contemporary art and design. It is a space for the presentation and interpretation of contemporary visual and material culture, and a site for gathering, conversation and learning. The program stresses the importance of learning through exhibition-making, using integrated projects and events across the year to engage audiences in conversation with commentators from a range of disciplines.

Tour Venues:

Between 2022 - 2024 *Zanny Begg | These Stories Will be Different* will travel to Redland Art Gallery, QLD; Shoalhaven Regional Gallery, NSW; Devonport Regional Gallery, TAS; Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW; Plimsoll Gallery, University of Tasmania, TAS; Tamworth Regional Gallery, NSW; Swan Hill Regional Gallery, VIC; Glasshouse, Port Macquarie, NSW; Artspace Mackay, QLD; and Goldfields Art Centre, WA.

A UNSW Galleries and Museums & Galleries of NSW touring exhibition. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body.



Know Your Exhibition:

- Read collateral like labels, essays and the catalogue
- Refer to this mediation handbook
- Read other exhibition support material such as the Education Kit
- Spend time with each of the works of art and reflect on how you feel and think in the moment
- Talk to other mediators in the Gallery such as staff and volunteers
- Exercise your mediation skills in talking with visitors. You may discover just as much from them as they do from you.
- Aim to learn enough about each aspect of the exhibition but accept that you may not know everything about every work. It's ok to say 'I don't know', in fact it could be an effective way to start a conversation.

Key Information:

- [Zanny Begg](#) (born 1972) is an Australian artist-filmmaker.
- Begg works between documentary and fiction using experimental forms of storytelling to explore hidden and/or contested histories
- Her work consistently returns to themes of gender, spatial justice and resistance
- She has won awards and commissions including:
 - [The Incinerator Art Award: Art for Social Change](#)
 - [ACMI and Artbank film commission](#)
 - [66th Blake Prize Established Artist Residency](#)

Glossary

Colonisation	Colonisation is an exploitive practice driven by the prospect of increased power and wealth whereby an invading foreign state controls a people or territory through often violent political subjugation. Colonisation involves occupying the land with settlers, imposing cultural practices on First Nations populations like language or religion, and commandeering the region's resources to benefit the colonising settler-nation.	Institutional Racism and Institutional Sexism	Institutional racism, also known as systemic racism or state racism , describes discriminatory treatment embedded in the policies and laws of a society against marginalised people based on their racial or ethnic identity. Institutional sexism similarly pertains to the entrenched policies of a government or institution that contributes to the disenfranchisement of one gender over another. Institutional sexism often results in a lack of gender diversity in leadership positions and a gender pay gap where on average, women earn less money than men for the same work.
Decolonisation	Decolonisation is the process of reversing colonisation whereby the invading settler-nation withdraws, leaving the formerly colonised region independent to determine the form and structure of its statehood and government. In Australia, where First Nations peoples still do not have self-determination and the Eurocentric coloniser's sociocultural systems remain, decolonisation is still underway.	Postcolonial Feminism	Postcolonial feminism responds to the predominantly Western perspective of the feminist move-ment at large to account for the longstanding social, cultural, political, and economic impacts of colonialism on women in postcolonial societies.
Feminism	Feminism is a movement campaigning for women's rights and advocating for gender equality across social, political, and economic systems. Additional forms of feminism like Black feminism and postcolonial feminism have emerged in recent decades to account for multicultural and intersectional perspectives.	Postcolonialism	Postcolonialism is a critical study of the continuing social, cultural, economic, and political ramifications of colonialism on the colonised peoples and lands. An important facet of postcolonialism is decentring Western ideologies in support of First Nations knowledge, culture, and ways of being.
Gender Identity	An individual's gender identity is their perception of their gender. Cisgender individuals identify as their biological sex, while transgender individuals identify with a gender different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity encompasses more than the male/female binary to include many different gender expressions, including individuals who identify as agender (no gender), gender fluid (no fixed gender), non-binary (does not identify as male or female), or intersex (individuals with bodies that do not fit into the binary of male/female sex), for example.	Queer Theory	Queer theory is a theoretical framework arising from queer and feminist studies that grapples with assumptions about gender identity and sexuality outside of the heteronormative perspective. Heterosexuality is the term for sexual behaviour or attraction towards an individual of the opposite sex. Queer theory challenges the perception that heterosexuality is 'normal' in an effort to dismantle binary distinctions and campaign against social inequality.
Intersectionality	Intersectionality describes the ways different social categorisations, including race, class, and gender, can intersect to form overlapping forms of privilege or discrimination. Black feminists point out how discrimination against Black women, for example, involves both racism and sexism.	Sexism	Sexism typically involves discriminatory or prejudiced attitudes towards an individual because of their sex. Women are often the target of sexist stereotyping and discriminatory behaviour.
		Transfeminism	Transfeminism is a sub-movement of feminism that advocates for the rights of transgender women, including their right to identify with their preferred gender rather than the sex they were as-signed at birth. While feminism champions gender equality, transwomen were previously excluded from the movement. Transfeminism is an intersectional movement recognising that multiple forms of sexism can intersect in discriminatory behaviours.

The Beehive (2018)

Commissioned by ACMI and Artbank. Exhibited ACMI 2018, Sydney Festival UNSW Galleries 2019, IMA Brisbane 2019

The Beehive is a non-linear experimental documentary exploring the unsolved murder of Sydney anti-development campaigner and glamorous style icon Juanita Nielsen in 1975. Nielsen campaigned against the violent eviction of tenants in Kings Cross, who were being pushed out to make way for apartment blocks. Juanita disappeared on the 4th of July 1975. Her body has never been found, and her murderers never charged.

“The puzzle of who killed me lies at the heart of this city. If you could solve that puzzle, you could save this city from itself” - *The Beehive*

The Beehive consists of scripted fictions, documentary interviews and choreographed scenes with multiple actors playing the role of Juanita. The film is ever-changing, as a different combination of the footage is randomly selected for each screening with 1,344 possible variations.

The work presents a kaleidoscopic portrait of Juanita Nielsen and is an exploration of issues (and experiences) of corruption, housing justice, non-conventional lifestyles and gentrification then and now.



Left: Zanny Begg, *The Beehive* (production still) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Hugh Hamilton

Listen: Podcast *Unravel: Juanita* which tackles one of Australia’s iconic true crime stories. This seven-episode podcast series follows an investigation by family members of the journalist and activist Juanita Nielsen 46 years after her sudden disappearance: <https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/truecrime/juanita/>

Read: *The Beehive* combines documentary interviews, scripted scenes and dreamlike poetic sequences to explore the infamous unsolved case of Juanita Nielsen. Read about the key players in her story: <https://www.acmi.net.au/stories-and-ideas/who-killed-juanita-nielsen/>

Watch: View an excerpt of *The Beehive* [here](#).

Glossary

Classism	(Also known as class discrimination) To hold prejudiced opinions or discriminate against members of a specific social class. These class structures are based on social and economic factors, like an individual’s wealth, occupation, or education. Frequently classism results in policies or institutional systems designed to benefit further those at the top, also known as the upper classes, often at the added cost to lower socioeconomic groups.
Gentrification	Gentrification occurs in lower socioeconomic areas when affluent individuals move in and ‘improve’ urban spaces, displacing the current businesses and residents. The influx of wealth associated with gentrification contributes to rising property and rent prices, with some redevelopment projects targeting social housing estates. Gentrification alters the social, racial, and economic demographics of urban neighbourhoods.
Social Feminism	Socialist feminism synthesises a campaign for women’s liberation with a critique of capitalist systems that benefit the patriarchy. Socialist feminism emerged from Marxist feminism , which points out that women are responsible for a significant amount of unpaid labour (domestic chores, childcare, for example) and frames these gendered divisions of labour as a form of exploitation in capitalist societies. Extending these ideas, socialist feminists argue that women’s liberation is connected to the social and economic justice of all peoples.
White Privilege	White privilege is a form of racial inequality that describes the hidden benefits and inherent advantages white-skinned or Caucasian individuals receive solely because of their race.



The City of Ladies (2017)

The City of Ladies (with Elise McLeod) is a video installation comprised of semi-randomly generated fragments of a film made in collaboration with young activists and feminists in Paris. Each time the film is screened these fragments will compile in different ways creating over 300,000 possible narratives inviting multiple readings of feminism.

The project is inspired by the fifteenth century proto-feminist novel of the same name by France's first professional female writer Christine de Pizan. *The City of Ladies* was written in 1402 and creates a utopian city built, populated and governed by women. de Pizan aimed to subvert masculine versions of history by describing, what she called, feminania, a pro-female view of the world.

This film premiered at the MCA, Sydney in *The National* 2017, and has since been exhibited at the Odessa Biennale, Ukraine; The Industrial Biennale, Croatia; rotor gallery, Gratz; "The Idea of the Avant-Garde", NeMe, Cyprus; and *My Life to Live*, Nova Gallery, Zagreb.



Collaborator Profile

Elise McLeod collaborated with Zanny Begg on *The City of Ladies*. She is a film and theatre director, performance coach and screenwriter, originally from Melbourne, who has lived and worked in Paris since 1997. McLeod's recent films include *Fish & Chicks* (2016) (Winner, Best World Short, Soho International Film Festival), *The City of Ladies* (2017) and *The City of Witches* (2018); the latter two films were co-directed and co-written with Zanny Begg. Her films have screened in numerous festivals in Europe and in the US. Her latest film, *Songlines*, is touring the festival circuit. McLeod has also directed plays, including *K Surprise*, *Revoir Amelie*, *Toutes Coupables* and *The Rabbi's Cat*.

Far left: Zanny Begg, *The City of Ladies* (still) 2017. Co-directed with Elise McLeod. Inset: Courtesy of the artist <https://www.elisemcleod.com/>



Illustration from Christine de Pizan, *The City of Ladies*, 1405, group of women welcome the Virgin Mary and other female saints into the City of Ladies. London, British Library, Harley MS 4431, fol. 361r

Read: Christine de Pizan's book *The City of Ladies* has inspired other artists to imagine how the world might be created differently for women, including British artist Tai Shani's American Judy Chicago - read more: <https://theconversation.com/city-of-ladies-modern-artists-are-redefining-a-15th-century-call-to-arms-by-an-early-french-feminist-142178>

Read: Learn more about an original copy of Pizan's book in the collection of the British Library here: <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-book-of-the-city-of-ladies>

Watch: *The City of Ladies* was presented as part of The National at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia in 2017. Zanny Begg talks about this work in an interview here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx6c4L3jMu8>

Glossary

Afrofeminism and Black Feminism	Black feminism exposes the numerous forms of oppression that intersect to constitute the lived experiences of Black women where institutional racism, sexism, and classism overlap to compound and further aggravate inequality. Afrofeminism (also afro-feminism) focuses on the experiences of women of African descent living in Europe by further contextualising their marginalisation and discrimination within the legacy of colonialism.
Islamophobia	Islamophobia is a hatred or prejudice against Muslims or individuals practising the Islamic religion. Islamophobia is a form of xenophobia, a fear or hatred of peoples from another country that can manifest in discriminatory behaviour or aversion to their customs or culture.
Misogyny	Misogyny is an extreme form of sexism that seeks to maintain patriarchal systems of power. It involves a deep, ingrained hatred or contempt for women.
Nuit Debout	Nuit Debout is a 2016 French social movement that formed in response to new labour laws. Trade unions and student groups protested the removal of certain employment protections that made it easier for employers to lay off workers and reduced overtime and severance pay. The activists gathered nightly in Place de la République in Paris to demonstrate their resistance to the labour reforms.



Stories of Kannagi (2019)

Stories of Kannagi tells a story within a story: a young women's struggle to save her husband from deportation and the 2000-year-old story of the Goddess Kannagi's troubled marriage. The two stories mirror each other before collapsing inwards in an exploration of love and forced migration.

Commissioned by STARTTS (Service for the Treatment And Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors) and created in collaboration with members of the Tamil community in Western Sydney. *Stories of Kannagi* premiered in April 2020, at Salamanca Arts Centre, Tasmania, in the exhibition *Older Than Language*. The project was funded by Australia Council for the Arts and STARTTS.



Collaborator Profile

Jiva Parthipan is a director, creative producer and arts/cultural worker based in Sydney. His work has been shown internationally, including Tate Modern; Institute of Contemporary Arts; Sadler's Wells Theatre; the National Review of Live Art (NRLA); IETM, Paris and Dublin; BONE Festival; Clandestino Festival, Sweden, and various festivals in Norway, Netherlands and South Africa. Jiva was an associate lecturer in Performance at Central St Martin College for the Arts, London and the first male to perform with Shobana Jeyasingh Dance.

Jiva currently works as an Arts and Cultural worker at STARTTS in Sydney, where he initiates, develops and presents arts and cultural activities with refugees in their own community settings, in collaboration with Australian cultural institutions. Recent theatre projects include *Little Baghdad*, in collaboration with Powerhouse Youth Theatre (PTY); Baulkham Hills African Ladies Troupe, in association with Racing Pulse, Belvoir Street Theatre and Riverside Theatre; Opera Australia's community choirs program at the Sydney Opera House; and *Dance Africa Dance* and *Let It Be* choral project at Riverside Theatre, Sydney. He has performed and produced projects with STARTTS as part of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, *NIRIN*, and will be part of the upcoming biennale *rivus*.

Watch a short video of another project *PARAI-YAH!* conceived by Jiva Parthipan and STARTTS as part of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney: *NIRIN* here: <https://www.mca.com.au/stories-and-ideas/drumming-unified-beat-parai-yah/>

Far left: Zanny Begg, Stories of Kannagi (still) 2019. Image courtesy of the artist.

Read about *Stories of Kannagi*'s inclusion in the Blake Prize here: <https://arichlife.com.au/66th-blake-prize-exhibition/>

Watch: *Stories of Kannagi* teaser from Zanny Begg on Vimeo.

Glossary

Diaspora	Diaspora describes peoples dispersed or scattered from their original geographic locale, often through forced displacement. Although diasporic populations resettle away from their ancestral homelands, they still maintain cultural ties and identify with their home country.
Political Asylum	An individual seeking political asylum leaves their home country to request protection or refuge in another country. Many individuals applying for asylum are fleeing dangerous situations like war or political unrest.
Tamil	The Tamils are a group of people from the southern part of India and Sri Lanka. Tamil is also the name of their common language, one of India's oldest classical languages. Following the decolonisation of Sri Lanka by the British, the Tamils suffered institutionalised discrimination that led to a 25-year civil war between the Sri Lankan army and the Tamil Tigers. From the mid-20th century onwards, many Tamils were displaced from their homeland and migrated to other parts of the world, forming the Tamil diaspora.



Above: Zanny Begg, *The Beehive* (production still) 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Enigma Machine. Photograph: Hugh Hamilton



A UNSW Galleries and Museums & Galleries of NSW touring exhibition. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory.



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