

Home and Away: Eight Asian Australian Artists

EDUCATION KIT STAGE 5 & 6



Agglomerate 2022-2023, newspaper crochet sculpture, 200 x 220 cm

THE EXHIBITION

Home and Away: Eight Asian Australian Artists

‘Home,’ it seems, is both nowhere and everywhere

The eight artists in *Home and Away* invite us to consider notions of ‘home’ and familial or ancestral connection in our increasingly uncertain world of porous borders, geopolitical tensions and climate change anxiety. Their constructions of selfhood and attachments to ‘home’ are built upon ancestral ties to Asia juxtaposed with fluid Asian/Australian identities. This is a process of becoming, a transcultural identity that the scholar Stuart Hall described as a form of ‘always postponed arrival’. Some were born elsewhere and migrated to Australia, others are Australian-born with parents who came as migrants. Some live and work in Australia and some have moved to a third country, navigating new diasporic uncertainties. They embrace their mobility, as they interrogate their own real and imagined journeys.

We all carry within us cartographies of identity – maps of everywhere we have lived, loved and lost. Over our lives these become a palimpsest of overlapping, overwritten fragments of time and place. In multicultural Australia such personal geographies are complicated, encompassing migration, the crossing of oceans and borders, the learning of new languages and unfamiliar cultural norms, and the reinvention of self. Unsurprisingly, cultural histories and references to Asian material culture are recurring themes in the work of these artists. A subtext of loss underlies many works, but this is juxtaposed with a strong desire for connection with cultural heritage, with language, and with the natural world. And in the work of each artist,

the physical, material properties of their chosen media and techniques are pregnant with meaning. 'Home,' it seems, is both nowhere and everywhere. It is always with us, and within us – whether we are here, or there, or somewhere else.

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Fruit #22020-2021, hand-cut Chinese mulberry paper, painted with watercolour, 100 x 100 cm, 103 x 103 x 0.4 cm with acrylic frame

VOCABULARY

Diaspora: the dispersion or spread of a people from their original homeland.
Please visit the Tate Museum [Diaspora](#) Art Term website to unpack this term in relation to contemporary and historical art contexts.

Transcultural: relating to or involving more than one culture; cross-culture.

FOR TEACHERS

Home and Away invites the integration of artists of Asian Australian upbringing into existing curricula and case study investigations. The exhibition provides an insight into personal experiences of displacement and discusses themes and perspectives on the notions of home, selfhood, belonging and identity. The eight artists span across a diversity of Asian nationalities, allowing students to immerse themselves in cultures and beliefs within the region, as well as explore the contrasting Australian societies the artists have established as a 'home away from home'. The exhibition demonstrates the artists' construction of selfhood through their connection to familial rituals, beliefs and traditions, while they share their upbringing and their idea of belonging in an Australian context.

Home and Away speaks to significant cultural and social issues existing with students' communities and nation. Australia is a multicultural country, made up of diverse races, languages, beliefs and customs. The themes and experiences discussed by the exhibiting artists capture contemporary Australia and its population. The artists live and work transculturally and communicate ideas of this nature. Depending on the geographical location, many students will be able to relate on a personal or community-based level. All students can use this exhibition to understand the complex human fabric that makes up their country. This exhibition and its educational resources provide an understanding that education on diversity, through any expression such as arts, is of value and high importance to the future of social progression and national identity.

CASE STUDIES

Consider examining and teaching this exhibition as an extension study following an Art & Identity, Art & Borders or Art & Women Artists case study.

Through these lenses students investigate the exhibition to examine how life experience, heritage and family can impact an artist's practice and understanding of their world. Therefore, teachers and students are encouraged to focus on the Subjective Frame and Conceptual Framework throughout the case exploration of this exhibition.

A key aspect of *Home and Away* is the idea that mediums and materiality can be used to communicate memories. As such, there is a diverse use of materials and processes used by the artists, which derives from their desire to connect with their family's lineage and culture by accessing memories and childhood experiences. As such, teachers and students are encouraged to question artists' choices and intentions by examining their material and conceptual practices and the relationship between material and message.

Suggested 16albermarle Project Space exhibitions and case studies:

- Our Grandfather Road: The (gendered) body and place in contemporary southeast Asian art.
<https://www.16albermarle.com/ogr-education>
- Ghosts from the past: Ipeh Nur and Enka Komariah
<https://16albermarle.com/ex13-education>

Home and Away features strong female artist practices, therefore teachers and students might also look comparatively at works by diaspora artists such as:

Iranian female artists:

- Exiled Shirin Neshat <https://nmwa.org/art/artists/shirin-neshat/>
- Roya Ebtehaj <https://royaebtehaj.com/about>
- Kiana Honarmand <https://www.kianahonarmand.com/about>

Asian female artists:

- Taiwanese-American Stephanie H. Shih <https://stephaniehshih.com/>
- Philippines-American Maia Cruz Palilio <https://www.maiacruzpalileo.com/about>
- Laotian-Australian Mechelle Bounraseuth <https://www.chalkhorse.com.au/artists/mechelle-bounraseuth>

EXHIBITION QUESTIONS

The questions provided in this resource may be used for written responses, examination preparation, or for open-ended discussions in the gallery or the classroom.

Pre-visit Questions for Years 9 – 12

- What is your idea of home? How has that been informed throughout your life?
- When do you feel like you belong? List the words, experiences, places, or actions that make you feel this way.
- How can family impact the way we see ourselves and the world?

Extended Response HSC Questions

Frames:

Select ONE of the artists shown in Home and Away and ONE artist you have studied. With reference to the specific works, answer this extended response question:

Analyse how emotion is used in artworks to provoke and generate discussion about ideas and issues.

Practice:

Select TWO of the artists shown in Home and Away. With reference to the specific works, answer this extended response question:

Explore how artist use their material practice to communicate ideas about their identity and self.

Conceptual Framework:

Select ONE of the artists shown in Home and Away and ONE artist you have studied. With reference to the specific works, answer this extended response question:

Analyse how TWO artists reflect and/or challenge aspects of their contemporary worlds.



Batas Suci 2022, acrylic in polycotton, 155 x 120 cm

CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUS LINKS

Teachers are encouraged to adapt this education resource for their curriculum, in and outside NSW. This education kit makes the following connections to:

Visual Arts NSW Stage 6 Syllabus:

Art Criticism/Art History Focus area:

- Practice: Artists and their experience with migration and cultural diversity / Artists, material practice and meanings / Curators and their role in social discussions
- Conceptual Framework: the ways in which the personal and wider world is communicated through art by the artist
- The Frames: Cultural history/Structural and material impact/Subjective and the use of symbols
- Identity and home as a Subject Matter

Art Criticism and Art History Outcomes:

Stage 5 Course: 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 5.10

Stage 6 Year 11: P7, P8, P9

Stage 6 HSC Year 12: H7, H8, H9

International Baccalaureate Diploma Syllabus:

Theoretical Practice

- *Visual Arts in Context: Students examine artists working in different cultural contexts and seek to understand the limitations and possibilities to discuss historical events through artmaking.*
- *Visual Arts in Methods: Students look at different techniques for making art. Students investigate and compare how and why different techniques have evolved, and the processes involved.*

Curatorial Practice

- *Visual Arts in Context: Students develop an informed response to work and exhibitions they have seen and experienced.*
- *Visual Arts in Methods: Students consider the nature of “exhibition” and think about the process of selection and the potential impact of work on different audiences.*

FOCUS ACTIVITIES

Here you will find *Home and Away* artist questions for classroom discussions. Teachers are encouraged to download the *Home and Away* catalogue and present the curatorial essay to their students. In this reading students can hear further information on the notion of diaspora and gain explicit information on how each artist addresses their ideas on 'home'. These activities also require access to artist interviews found on the 16albermarle *Home and Away* exhibition page.



Basa Basi (Mau Ke Mana) 2022 acrylic on polycotton, 155 x 120 cm

Ida Lawrence

Painter Ida Lawrence weaves stories of her Indonesian and Australian families and the interactions and absurdities of daily life through juxtapositions of colour, pattern, imagery and text. They are informed by research, observations and the tragi-comedic experiences of a life lived between Australia, Indonesia and Germany where she currently lives and works in Berlin. Lawrence has been based in Indonesia at different times, including 2010-2013 while studying dance with the Darmasiswa Scholarship at the Indonesian Arts Institute, Yogyakarta. Ida is a member of Woven Kolektif, a group of artists who formed through their shared connections to Indonesia and Australia.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch Ida Lawrence's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

How does Ida use her painting practice to understand her world?

Unpack the visual motifs in Lawrence's artwork and analyse how she manipulates her motifs in the repetition process.

Lawrence speaks about a 'vibration' through her colour and repetition choices, how does she describe this effect taking place and how does it create emotion in her work?



Haw Par Villa Rock Study #43 2022, 18 x 27 x 9 cm, glazed stoneware

Jessica Bradford

Singapore-born, Sydney-raised Australian artist Jessica Bradford works across painting, ceramics, video and installation. She explores her mixed-race heritage, questioning representations of an 'authentic' cultural or national identity. Her work in *Home and Away* riffs on the artificial landscape of an eccentric Singaporean theme park, Haw Par Villa. Bradford's small porcelain forms emulate the artifice of Chinese gardens, and of the Chinese 'scholar rocks', or *gongshi*, that members of the élite Imperial bureaucracy liked to place on their desks to remind them of the fantastical forms of the natural world.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch Jessica Bradford's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

Bradford's artworks depict her childhood memories. How does she describe these and what can you see within her work that helps you understand her experiences?

Bradford speaks about Singapore having a transcultural context. What does she mean by this and how does it get explored through her work?

Discuss Bradford's ideas behind fantastical landscapes versus geographical stories in relation to issues on loss and cultural identity.



Linda Sok, *Mending fragments of a memory* 2021, fabric (assorted), metal trinkets, string, rattan, paint, dimensions variable

Linda Sok

Cambodian Australian artist Linda Sok navigates complex memories of loss, dispossession, love and family through the medium of discarded, repurposed textiles. Her work in *Home and Away* utilises fabrics that her grandmother and aunt had sewn together many years before, producing a cross-generational collaborative work as a means of sharing language and culture. Like other artists in the exhibition, Sok feels disconnected from her Cambodian heritage and language. By piecing together these different textiles she is piecing together stories from her childhood, including her family's flight from the Khmer Rouge and the Cambodian genocide.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch Linda Sok's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

Sok speaks about being a 'generation down'. What is she referring to and how does this impact her cultivation of ideas and concepts?

Sok reflects on her migration to the US for an art residency and her parents' migration to Australia from Cambodia. Think about someone's personal experience, list the feelings, issues, concerns and experiences that take place in both a chosen and forced migration. Compare your two lists and extend your questioning to analyse the impact freedom and belonging has on a person's wellbeing.

What is the significance of textiles in Sok's practice? What choices and decisions does she make to deepen the materials connection to family and culture?



Compass Broken 2020, cast blackwood crystal glass, LED lights, steel, Perspex, marble, 44 x 56 x 43cm

NC Qin

NC Qin is an Australian-born emerging sculptor who works mostly with glass. Her works reflect on her ancestral Chinese culture from the distance of this further shore. *Compass Broken* and three *Moongates* explore this sense of dislocation. *Compass Broken* refers to the ancient Daoist compass which shows the symbols of each of the mythical guardian beasts that rule the cardinal directions – the Tortoise of the North, the Tiger of the East, the Phoenix of the South and the Dragon of the West. But this compass is cracked and no longer functional, representing ‘third culture kids’ who try to reach out to the culture of their ancestors but find only a superficial sense of connection.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch NC Qin’s artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

How does NC Qin define her separation from other glass artists, what is it that draws her to this medium? What do you think she means when she describes this attraction?

NC Qin speaks about Daoist colours. Research these colours and align them to their rightful natural elements of Daoist guardian beast symbolism.

What concerns does NC Qin share when observing the gap between her generation and her parents’ generation? How do these concerns take form in her work?



Hello 你好嘛? (Nei Hou Ma) 2023, 35 x 68 cm, neon

Pamela Leung

For Hong Kong-born multidisciplinary artist Pamela Leung, the idea of home is increasingly painful and the sense of loss acute. Is 'home' any longer recognisable when its history of a distinctly Cantonese language and culture is steadily erased? In neon signs, installations and performance works Leung examines how the loss of a unique Hong Kong identity exacerbates the pain of being separated from her own history. Her ongoing project, *Agglomerate*, is a collaborative work begun with her mother and continued with participants across the globe who send her long strings created from Chinese newspapers printed in the Traditional Chinese characters used in Hong Kong and Taiwan. She crochets these into a woven mat of unreadable text – creating an artifact of an invisible and endangered cultural and linguistic history.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch Pamela Leung's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

What is the intention behind the making of Leung's artwork *Hello 你好嘛? (Nei Hou Ma)*? How might her intended audience feel when viewing this work?

Why has Leung chosen this media to create this artwork? How does this create deeper meaning?

Leung speaks thoughtfully about the power of language across borders. When thinking about human connection, how can language create positive and negative boundaries or impacts?



Distant memories 2021, black clay, porcelain, pigment, glaze, custom metal stand, 24.5 x 20.5 x 15 cm (32 x 21 x 15 cm with stand)

Ruth Ju-Shih Li

Ruth Ju-shih Li is a Taiwanese-Australian artist whose works draw on her cultural and spiritual heritage. Li works with fine porcelain and also creates intricate, ephemeral raw clay installations. Her work is a celebration of renewal, natural cycles of life and the gradual progression of time. Speaking in the universal language of flowers, these chimerical microcosms of organic forms are autobiographical, yet mirror and extend onward to consider the fleeting nature of the human condition. Informed by her interest in articulating the complexities of her cultural identities, Li examines cultural confluences and intersections between humans and the natural world. Li divides her time between her studio in Sydney, her birth city Taipei and her ancestral homeland of China - where her second studio is based in the porcelain city of Jingdezhen.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch Ruth Ju-Shih Li's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

How does Li describe ceramics? Elaborate on this idea of cross-cultural and cross-class, what power does this give Ju-Shih Li's works?

What meaning do the titles hold for Li?

How does meditation become part of her ideation and artmaking processes?

What cultural meaning and symbolism do flowers have to the Australian and Taiwanese flowers? How and why does Li introduce an element of imagination to her work?



Ritual of eels: Loving the alien, ongoing series since 2019, pigment print on Fine art gloss paper, 71.6 x 91.1 cm

Shoufay Derz

Born in Australia to a Taiwanese mother and German father, Shoufay Derz explores themes of the fragility of existence and the possibility/impossibility of communication across languages and cultures. The photographic and video works exhibited in *Home and Away* grew out of a project that brought indigenous history, water research scientists and artists together at Gulgadya Muru, a wild area of the Manly Dam Reserve in Sydney and then continued in Berlin. For *Ritual of Eels: Loving the Alien* her participants were painted bright, chromakey green and photographed submerged in the water, only their heads visible between the lily pads. For Derz the figure of the 'alien' represents the possibility of transformation. It also alludes to the 'illegal alien', the undocumented, the unwelcome, the foreigner – the 'other'. Derz sometimes says her works are like 'bad poems' – grasping at the ineffable, the unsayable. She imagines fragile, mysterious threads of connection and belonging that tie us to the natural world and to each other.

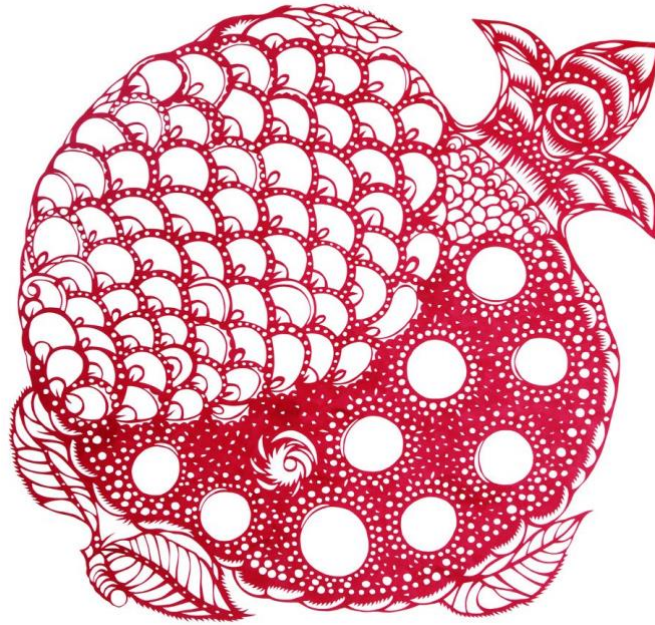
Think About/Discuss:

Watch Shoufay Derz's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

Describe the ritual of eels in terms of its performance aspects. What does the artist invite and ask of the participants? How does this experience draw connection to her perspective on culture and connection?

How does Derz' prolonged project push the boundaries of traditional artmaking?

Derz speaks about the project having a balance of gravity and humour. How is this shown through the works and how does it relate to her broader themes on cultural connection and experience? Can you give examples of non-art related examples of where people experience this balance in society?



Fruit #3 2020-2021, hand-cut Chinese mulberry paper, painted with watercolour, 100 x 100 cm, 103 x 103 x 0.4 cm with acrylic frame

Tianli Zu

Beijing-born and Sydney-based multidisciplinary artist Tianli Zu's practice spans painting, sculpture, multimedia installations and video. But at the heart of her work are techniques of papercutting and Chinese folklore. Zu's grandmother taught her simple paper cutting techniques, and her grandfather taught her calligraphy. Later, as an art student in Beijing she travelled to rural Shaanxi Province. Seated in tiny rural homes she learned papercutting from women who knew the traditional methods, listening to stories about the sources of imagery and symbolism. 'It's told through the story, the folklore, it's lots of things that are forbidden, and there are lots of things that are so wild,' she says. Her work in *Home and Away* juxtaposes Chinese traditions relating to health, longevity and the sharing of food with her love for the natural world.

Think About/Discuss:

Watch Tianli Zu's artist interview with curators Luise Guest and Jennifer Yang [here](#).

At the heart of her work, Zu explores the interplay of what concept? Conduct a little research on this concept and what it means to a Chinese and Australian culture.

In her exhibiting works, what metaphors and symbols appear through her paper fruits?

What global issues does Zi explore through her works?

Zu speaks about the 'dance' that takes place between herself, the tools and her medium. Listen closely to the interview and observe the three works in the exhibition. How does her metaphor relate to her broader concept and themes?

