

Benalla Art Gallery Committee

Agenda

Date: Tuesday 13 April 2021

Time: 5pm

Venue: Civic Centre (Council Meeting Room)
13 Mair Street, Benalla
and via MS Teams

Benalla Civic Centre
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1 Bridge Street
Benalla Victoria 3671
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Agenda

Chair	Barbara Alexander	
Committee	Cr Danny Claridge	Council representative
	Cr Peter Davis	Council representative
	Tim Abdallah	General member
	Brad Hearn	Friends of Benalla Art Gallery representative
	Winsome McCaughey	General member
	Bess Nolan-Cook	CEO Tourism North East
	Anna Parle	General member
	Fiona Stephens	General member
	Alice Tallis	General member
In Attendance	Eric Nash	Director Benalla Art Gallery
	Dom Testoni	Chief Executive Officer

Apologies

Disclosures of conflict of interest

In accordance with the *Local Government Act 2020*, all Committee members must declare any conflict of interest pursuant to Sections 127 and 128 of the Act in any items on this Agenda.

Section 130 also requires that the Committee member declaring a conflict of interest must exclude themselves from the decision making process in relation to that matter.

Confirmation of the Minutes of the previous meeting

Recommendation:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Benalla Art Gallery Committee held on 10 December 2020 be confirmed.

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Business

1. Director’s report – April 2021

SF/1742

Eric Nash – Director, Benalla Art Gallery

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides an update on the operations of the Benalla Art Gallery since the previous meeting.

DISCUSSION

Bushfire Brandalism and Sidney Nolan

Benalla Art Gallery is currently presenting *Bushfire Brandalism*, an exhibition documenting a landmark environmental street art campaign undertaken by 41 of the country’s leading street artists, and pleasingly the works are loaned directly from the National Gallery of Victoria – which appears to be the first significant loan Benalla Art Gallery has secured from the NGV since 2015.

To create more layered discussions across the Gallery, the Gallery is also presenting the entire suite of Sidney Nolan’s *Drought Photographs* from the Benalla Art Gallery Collection. This also appears to be the first time the entire suite of these important photographs has been shown and is an initiative to improve access to some of the Gallery’s important holdings outside of exhibitions staged in the Ledger Gallery.

Robert Jacks and Northern Abstraction

From late April Benalla Art Gallery will present an exhibition of musically inspired works by one of the country’s most significant abstract artists, Robert Jacks. The Gallery has partnered with his Estate to loan all of the works directly and will contextualise the display through an essay by Kirsty Grant, who was a Senior Curator at the National Gallery of Victoria previously, and put together the major Robert Jacks retrospective several years ago. The show honours Jacks’ important connection to Benalla Art Gallery also, with one of his paintings being among the first four works recommended for acquisition by Patrick McCaughey in the late 1960s.

To celebrate our own artists and again create a layered discussion across the facility, this time exploring abstraction, we will present at the same time *Northern Abstraction* - varied approaches to abstract painting by three artists with deep ties to the region, Ralph Bristow, Frank Burgers, and Anthea Kemp.

These exhibitions are currently in the final stages of development.

Re-gathering programming

To coincide with the collaborative exhibition *Re-gathering*, a panel discussion was staged in January to explore issues of mental health and resilience, bringing this important discussion into the light, particularly timely given Benalla's high recorded rates of mental health issues and suicide.

Benalla Art Gallery continues to collaborate with both RACV and MPavilion, with further public programming to be staged during the *Re-gathering* exhibition. Plans are being developed for an outreach school workshop at Devenish Primary School; a slow art workshop at Benalla Art Gallery by professional artist Anna Farago, and a multi-faceted closing party, intended to appeal to a broad section of the community, including indoor and outdoor activations from workshop components to DJs.

Damien Shen festival representation

Damien Shen: A Stone from Another Mountain recently featured as part of the *PHOTO 2021 International Festival of Photography*, and while a small exhibition, it was a significant outcome to be included as an official part of a broader state-wide festival. Benalla was one of only a small selection of regional participants, also including Geelong, Horsham, Bendigo, and Ballarat, and this type of connection enhances the Gallery's and region's presence in the sector and ability to market and amplify the program beyond Benalla.

Participation also provided the opportunity to discuss plans for next year's festival with their Director, Elias Redstone, who has expressed enthusiasm for Benalla and a keenness for the Gallery to 'scale up participation' to become a genuine focal point of the program, through both exhibition and temporary public art, and the commissioning of new work in direct response to an important part of Benalla's cultural history.

Working for Victoria – Collection Digitisation

Benalla Art Gallery is the recipient of support through the Victorian Government's Working for Victoria initiative, with two Digitisation Support Officers (1.4 FTE) enabling continued progress in the Gallery's efforts to digitise its entire Collection.

This Working for Victoria program is facilitated by the Australian Museums & Galleries Association Victoria (AMaGA Victoria) in partnership with Creative Victoria. This initiative has allowed Benalla Art Gallery to host the two Digitisation Support Officers for six months, with Annabelle Williams and Maggie Hollins having commenced in February.

Work on a batch upload of approximately 250 works is nearing completion, which would translate to over half of the Gallery's Collection having been digitised. The staff resource has improved the Gallery's capacity to investigate works noted as being held offsite, such as at the Moira Club, Benalla Historical and Kelly Costume Museum, etc. Work will continue to be required in this regard as works held offsite require condition assessment, formal loan agreements put in place if continued display is appropriate, or the works returned to the Gallery if required.

The Working for Victoria support has also enabled the purchase of a dedicated Collection iMac to improve image handling.

Recruitment – Curator of Education and Programs

Benalla Rural City Council commenced advertising for a Curator of Education and Programs (0.6 FTE) from beginning of April, with applications closing 12 April. This will fill a vacancy in the current Gallery structure which has existing since the retirement of Meredith Paez contract on 30 June 2020.

Attendance and Lockdown

Since re-opening to the public following the easing of restrictions on the Gallery sector on Monday 23 November, the Gallery has performed well, particularly in light of the findings of COVID-19 Audience Outlook research conducted by the Australia Council for the Arts in collaboration with Patternmakers and WolfBrown.

The findings in September revealed 7 per cent of respondents were still ‘Not comfortable’ to walk around a museum or Gallery, and 45 per cent were only ‘Somewhat comfortable’.

While the outlook from March surveying was more positive, with only 2 per cent of respondents ‘Not comfortable’ and 23 per cent ‘Somewhat comfortable’, the snap five-day lockdown implemented by the State Government in mid-February impacted visitation to Benalla Art Gallery not only during the five days of closure, but in a temporary dip in attendance rates in the fortnight that followed.

Exhibition Attendance:

Exhibition <i>(from 1/1/2021 to 31/3/2021, inclusive lockdown closure from 13/2 to 17/2/2021)</i>	Dates	Attendance	Days	Daily average
Re-gathering: Benalla Art Gallery Collection x RACV Art Collection Ledger Gallery	1 January–31 March 2021	6458	73	88
Kirstin Berg: Still in Love with the World Simpson Gallery	1–17 January 2021	1082	15	72
Experimental: Make Sense – International Triennial of Media Art Bennett Gallery	1 January– 14 February 2021	4591	37	124
Damien Shen: A Stone from Another Mountain Simpson Gallery	22 January – 21 March 2021	2711	47	58
Bushfire Brandalism Bennett Gallery	5 – 31 March 2021	2549	23	110
Sidney Nolan: Drought Photographs Simpson Gallery	24 – 31 March 2021	590	7	84

Public and Education Program Attendance:

<i>Programs and Events</i> <i>(from 1/1/2021 to 31/3/2021, inclusive lockdown closure from 13/2 to 17/2/2021)</i>	Age Group	No.	Attendance
NGV Kids on Tour	Children	1	40
Oribotics Workshop with Matthew Gardiner	Teen / Adult	1	8
Re-gathering Resilience Panel Discussion	Teen / Adult	1	20
Tracing Turbulence Workshop with Scale Free Network	All ages	1	14
First Mondays: History and Highlights of the RACV Art Collection with Mardi Nowak	Adult	1	30
Online Event: Finders Keepers: In Conversation with Judy Watson	All ages	1	Unmeasured
School Tour: FCJ Years 10-11	Teen	1	11
First Mondays: An insight into the PHOTO 2021 International Festival of Photography with Elias Redstone	Adult	1	34
In Conversation - Damien Shen with Ashley Crawford	All ages	1	26
Benalla Art Gallery Presentation to the Benalla Historical Society AGM	Adult	1	30
Benalla Art Gallery Presentation to the Rotary Club of Mansfield	Adult	1	24
Tomorrow Today Careers Day	Teen	1	25
Benalla Art Gallery Presentation to the Rotary Club of Benalla	Adult	1	40

Attachment: [Strategic Plan Progress Report – April 2021](#)

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS APRIL 2021

Goal 1. To improve, protect and conserve the Benalla Art Gallery permanent collection				
OBJECTIVE 1	Key Strategies	Actions & Achievements	Progress	Performance Indicators
Objective 1.1 To improve the Benalla Art Gallery permanent collection	Acquire, by purchase, gift and bequest, works of art of outstanding quality in line with the Benalla Art Gallery Collections and Acquisitions Policy	Final selection of 73 works by 13 Australian artists to be gifted by Dr Douglas A Kagi through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program determined, valuations currently being undertaken. A proposal for gift of works by Michael Cook brought forward for consideration at April meeting.		1.1 That the actual annual spend on conservation and repair work be no less than \$1 for every \$2000 worth of total collection value. 1.2 That all works considered to be of significance be digitised within the life of the Plan. 1.3 That all works considered to be of significance are reviewed to establish clear copyright status within the life of the Plan 1.4 That short and longer term storage solutions, with the available budget and resources, be executed. 1.5 That the industry accepted deaccession process be applied. 1.6 That the collection store have appropriate environmental controls, including temperature and humidity.
	Where possible, remove from the Gallery collection, by an appropriate de-accession process, works that do not fit within the Benalla Art Gallery Collections and Acquisitions Policy.	Development of a list of works eligible for de-accession currently on hold pending the completion of the digitisation project.		
	Encourage, facilitate and acknowledge funding, donations, gifts and bequests that enhance the Benalla Art Gallery collection.	New acquisitions to be clearly identified when first exhibited. This has been undertaken for recent Juan Ford acquisition included in Collection exhibition <i>Re-gathering</i> .		
		Benalla Art Gallery proactively nurturing relationships with past and prospective donors.		
Objective 1.2 To protect and conserve the Benalla Art Gallery permanent collection.	Provide appropriate storage, security and environmental conditions	A Standard Facility Report was developed. In unison with work toward the Digitisation Project, Benalla Art Gallery staff have been physically inspecting and condition reporting works, as well as wrapping and labelling works in the Till Unit, and improving logic and use of space in the racks. Recent State Government funding will enable construction of appropriate offsite storage.		
	Provide appropriate financial and other resources to adequately conserve and repair works	A comprehensive record of ideal conservation treatment for all significant artworks, and priority list and proposed timeframe with cost estimates was proposed to be developed in-line with the digitisation project. The scope of the digitisation project has not allowed for this, and work will need to be undertaken in due course. Staff continually monitor the condition of artworks being handled or on display to identify any pressing concerns, and as mentioned, a high volume of condition reports have been completed to get a more comprehensive indication of current conditions. Preliminary work is also being undertaken through Council on an Asset Management Plan.		
	Document and manage the collection, including maintaining current digital records to an industry best practice standard	An upload of another approximately 240 works will be completed in mid-April, taking the total of Benalla Art Gallery records digitised to over 600 (and over half of the Collection). Benalla Art Gallery has access additional support in this project through AMAGA and creative Vic's Working for Victoria Program, with 1.4FTE dedicated entry-level staff supporting the project from February to July. A new upload of approximately 130 Collection works has commenced. This upload is focussed on works on paper, and will coincide with a review and improvement of the storage and record management of the Gallery's map drawers.		
	Continue with securing copyright permission for individual work	Over 600 works in the Collection are now able to be reproduced, either through clearances secured, or identification of the copyright being expired. This number continues to grow as final review of uploaded records prior to publishing identifies historical documents or recently returned agreements.		

		Benalla Art Gallery recently secured copyright clearance for works by Lorna Chick to support and digital exhibition being developed by Jessica Clark through NETS Victoria in response to the Benalla Art Gallery Collection.		
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Goal 2. Increase engagement of the community with the Gallery collection, exhibitions and programs				
OBJECTIVE 2	Key Strategies	Actions & Achievements	Progress	Performance Indicators
Objective 2.1 Display and exhibit works of art	Display art works from the permanent collection in a manner that provides opportunities for deeper engagement.	<p>Benalla Art Gallery is currently displaying the Collection through <i>Re-gathering</i>, and also the Sidney Nolan <i>Drought Photographs</i> presentation.</p> <p>The exhibition <i>Regeneration</i> scheduled for the latter half of 2021 will focus on floral and botanical works from the Benalla Art Gallery Collection.</p> <p>Benalla Art Gallery is awaiting final designs of the online exhibition placing 15 works from the Benalla Art Gallery Collection in dialogue with 15 contemporary works, curated by Jessica Clark through NETS Victoria.</p> <p>Benalla Art Gallery Collection works are also on loan for State institution major exhibitions, and in peer regional gallery displays:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arthur Streeton's <i>Impressions for Golden Summer</i> on display in NGV's blockbuster <i>She-oak and sunlight: Australian Impressionism</i> Ivan Durrant's <i>Judy Garland</i> on display in NGV's Ivan Durrant survey exhibition <i>Barrier Draw</i> Clarice Beckett's <i>Spring morning</i> and <i>Beach scene</i> on display in AGSA's Clarice Beckett retrospective <i>The present moment</i> Fred Williams' <i>Yarra River at Yering</i> to be included in the Burringa Gallery exhibition, <i>Fred Williams: The Upwey Years</i> 		<p>2.1 Visitor numbers grow and visitor feedback is positive</p> <p>2.2 New brand identity for the Benalla Art Gallery launched</p> <p>2.3 Social media engagement grows</p> <p>2.4 Engagement in public programs is meaningful</p> <p>2.6 Different sections of the permanent collection are displayed</p>
	Present a well-researched, balanced, stimulating, informative and enjoyable exhibitions program	The Benalla Art Gallery's efforts to present this diverse exhibition program has been positively received, with 17,981 visitors to the three exhibition spaces recorded in the first quarter. A total of 13,859 visitors have been recorded through the building's front door counter during the first quarter, thus highlighting the Gallery's recent success in engaging a high percentage of visitors with some, or all, of the exhibitions presented at the time of their visit.		
Objective 2.2 Promote the Benalla Art Gallery	Develop and launch a new brand identity for the Gallery	All graphic materials have been delivered in-line with the new brand. Work is continuing to see the broader intent of the new brand embedded in the Gallery's program and the ways it is communicated.		
	Promote highlight exhibitions, and other opportunities for engagement to increase visitation	<p>Positive outcomes in the first quarter have included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WIN News Shepparton coverage of Sidney Nolan and <i>Bushfire Brandalism</i> exhibitions Feature as part of Tourism North East's Benalla 'High Country' takeover, covering all current exhibitions to coincide with the Easter long weekend <i>Bushfire Brandalism</i> feature as part of the Public Galleries Association of Victoria's <i>HIGHLIGHTS from Victorian Public Galleries</i> mailout Presentations to community groups including the Historical Society and Rotary Club of Benalla 1.5% organic audience growth of Facebook page, and 1.8% organic audience growth of Instagram page. 		
	Present the Benalla Art Gallery brand in a consistent and credible manner	As per report for 'Develop and launch a new brand identity for the Gallery'.		
	Promote the Gallery as a regional tourism product, with a focus on partnerships and collaboration	<p>As part of the Benalla Rural City Council tourism strategy, the Gallery will be promoted as one of the key attractions in the region. Exhibition matrix approach identifies regional tourism enhancement as a major consideration.</p> <p>Benalla Art Gallery has made itself available for various engagements with the tourism sector, including sector consultations and providing private viewings to inform editorial pieces, and developing content for the aforementioned 'High Country' Instagram takeover.</p>		

Objective 2.3 Increase access to the permanent collection	Use collection displays, Gallery exhibitions, travelling exhibitions, loans, publications, programs and new technology to increase access to the permanent collection	As per reports for 'Document and manage the collection, including maintaining current digital records to an industry best practice standard' and 'Display art works from the permanent collection in a manner that provides opportunities for deeper engagement.	
	Finalise the business case and plans for the development of the Art Gallery masterplan	Final Report presented on behalf of the Committee by Winsome McCaughey to an Assembly of Benalla Rural City Council in February.	
Objective 2.4 Provide interesting and relevant education and public programs	Present innovative, informative and engaging public programs	Benalla Art Gallery public programs have recommenced, with 12 physical program presented in the quarter for 302 participants. Recruitment is underway for the 0.6FTE Curator of Education and Programs vacancy which will further enhance capacity.	
	Stimulate engagement and understanding of the visual arts through events, workshops, learning opportunities and lectures	The diversity of activity to provide opportunities for engagement and understanding included public talks, artist talks, school tours, workshops for various ages and with a diversity of media, and a public forum.	
	Engage with the Victorian School Curriculum to ensure programs are targeted and appropriate for students and teachers	Benalla Art Gallery has adopted a leadership role in the region through the coordination and staging of the <i>VCE Showcase</i> exhibition. This has been alternatively presented in 2020 as an online exhibition. Staff will work with peers at Shepparton Art Museum to streamline administrative processes required of VCE student artists to participate in planned 2021 exhibitions at both venues, to minimise overlap, and to ensure models are based off industry best practice outcomes as evidenced in NGV's <i>Top Arts</i> exhibition.	
Objective 2.5 Provide high-quality services and an enjoyable, accessible environment for visitors.	Provide a level of visitor service which is welcoming, knowledgeable and consistent with a Gallery of premium standing	Development of appropriate visitor services standards which are observed by all staff and volunteers to be developed – pending. Development of Conditions of Entry policy to ensure safety and enjoyment of all visitors – a general document is pending, however Conditions of Entry were developed and have been communicated in the context of operating a COVIDSafe public gallery.	
	Seek and respond to visitor feedback	Benalla Art Gallery has continued to collect visitor responses and demographic insights through general reception surveying during the quarter.	
	Seek to refine the Gallery Café Lease agreement	MUNRO & SARGEANT café re-opened during the quarter under the new management of Kathryn Enid.	
	Continue to improve the Gallery retail space	The Gallery has grossed \$19,615.54 in retail sales through the quarter. This includes a week of no trade through closure. For comparison: In Q3 2019/2020, which also included a week of COVID related closure, the shop grossed \$21,882.55, however strong sales were generated late in the quarter through merchandise related to the SOFLES exhibition which was to be presented as part of <i>Wall to Wall</i> In an uninterrupted Q3 of 2018/2019, the shop grossed \$22,728. While this year's performance is slightly down on these years, sales are trending in the right direction as visitor confidence returns.	

Goal 3. Maximise support for Gallery operations

OBJECTIVE 3	Key Strategies	Actions and Achievements	Progress	KPIs
Objective 3.1 Develop and maintain strategic relationships.	Actively engage with all levels of Government	This is done as part of regular operations.		3.1 Sound financial position and financial capacity to host large scale events 3.2 Stakeholder satisfaction with facilities and services 3.3 Establish a Foundation for the Gallery through which funds can be raised for the redevelopment of the Art Gallery 3.4 Raise funds for the redevelopment of the Art Gallery
	Work collegially as part of the visual arts sector	Benalla Art Gallery continues to engage with the sector nationally through the consideration and appropriate approval of loan requests, representation at key events and in relevant discussions, and chiefly through the peak body, Public Galleries Association of Victoria. Benalla Art Gallery continues to foster a stronger relationship with our state gallery, the National Gallery of Victoria, through presentation of loaned works, meetings with Director Tony Ellwood, and representation on the Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists.		
	Develop and maintain productive relationships with artists, donors, sponsors, members and other key stakeholders	Relationships with artists, donors, potential sponsors, members and other stakeholders are proactively developed and nurtured as evidenced in Director discussions and recent studio visit to the Estate of Robert Jacks.		
	Continue to work with Tourism North East, other galleries and appropriate regional tourism operators	Benalla Art Gallery has confirmed or received in-principle agreement for current and future partnerships with organisations including RACV, MPavilion, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Craft Victoria, NGV, and Arts Project Australia.		
Objective 3.2 Secure and manage the Gallery's financial resources	Establish a Foundation for the Gallery for the purpose of securing its long-term financial security	Being progressed through CEO in liaison with Chair, Winsome McCaughey, and appointed Trustees, Margaret Richards and Cr Peter Davis.		
	Secure funding and support for Gallery operations and programs from Government, corporate and private sources	Appropriate funding programs to be identified to support the key objectives of the gallery.		
	Maximise return from commercial operations	Return from commercial operations has improved with the re-opening of the MUNRO & SARGEANT café and deriving lease income. Retail performance as previous.		
	Manage financial resources effectively, aligning them with strategic and financial plans	This is done as part of regular operations; the Gallery continues to present a highly ambitious exhibition and events program within the constraints of allocated budget.		
	Develop a Philanthropic Funding Strategy	A cohesive fundraising plan to be developed for all Gallery operations, including philanthropic contributions – this will need to be undertaken in lock-step with development of Trust, and consider overlap of various stakeholder groups with existing major or minor fundraising objectives.		
Objective 3.3 Manage the infrastructure of the Gallery	Maintain the Gallery building to a high standard	All regular facilities tests (airconditioning, fire systems, etc.) completed, and monitoring of performance ongoing. Identified issues with various systems communicated through Council for immediate rectification or inclusion in future budget processes. Benalla Art Gallery has sought and is awaiting recommendation on a blueetooth, centralized dimming system compatible with most recently purchased light fittings, and also recommendations of quantity of new light fittings that will eb required as old Halogen fixtures need to be phased out.		
	Maintain the Gallery building so it best protects the Gallery permanent collection	As per report for 'Provide appropriate storage, security and environmental conditions'.		
	Consider environmental sustainability in the Gallery operations	This is done as part of regular operations.		
Objective 3.4 Renew the Gallery infrastructure	Finalise the business case and plans for the development of the Gallery masterplan, ensuring it best serves the needs of the Gallery and its audience	Final Report presented on behalf of the Committee by Winsome McCaughey to an Assembly of Benalla Rural City Council in February.		

2. Exhibition schedule 2020/2021/2022

SF/1742

Eric Nash – Director, Benalla Art Gallery

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents the 2020/2021/2022 exhibition schedule.

DISCUSSION

This report captures exhibitions at various stages of development, and also changes made necessary due to direct and indirect impacts of sector-wide COVID-19 closures.

EXHIBITION SCHEDULE 2020 / 2021 / 2022

Ledger Gallery:

ARTIST	TITLE	DATES	PARTNERSHIP	STATUS	NOTES
Various – Benalla Art Gallery Collection x RACV Art Collection	Re-gathering	18 December 2020 – 20 June 2021	Presented in partnership with RACV and MPavilion as part of AMPLIFY program	Current	Community voice embedded in exhibition, explores notions of human connection stemming from COVID-19
Various – Benalla Art Gallery Collection	Regeneration	25 June – 5 December 2021	Internal	Confirmed	Celebrates Botanical Gardens surrounds, opportunity for expanded precinct programming
Jenny Watson	TBC	11 September – 3 October 2021	National Pony Club Championships, Roslyn Oxley9	TBC	Enhance the Gallery’s engagement with the local community by providing direct value to a significant event, National Pony Club Championships

Bennett Gallery:

ARTIST	TITLE	DATES	PARTNERSHIP	STATUS	NOTES
Various	Experimenta Make Sense: International Triennial of Media Art	11 December 2020 – 14 February 2021	Experimenta	Completed	Make Sense touring in place of Life Forms due to COVID-19 impacts on development and launch of Triennial
Various – 41 leading Australian Street Artists	Bushfire Brandalism	5 March – 25 April 2021	Supported by the National Gallery of Victoria through the Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists [VFLAA]	Current	Regional relevance owing to the recent bushfires, the works also generate discussions regarding the history of street art and its interface with political activism, and ownership / occupation of public space in advertising versus art
Robert Jacks	Rhythmic Compositions	30 April – 1 August 2021	The Estate of Robert Jacks, Kirsty Grant, Segue Art	Confirmed	Works made available directly through the Estate
Fulli Andrinopoulos, Dorothy Berry, Yvette Coppersmith, Wendy Dawson, Prudence Flint, Helga Groves, Bronwyn Hack, Janelle Low, Eden Menta, Jill Orr, Lisa Reid, Heather Shimmen, Cathy Staughton and Jane Trengove	FEM- aFFINITY	6 August – 17 October 2021	NETS Victoria, Arts Project Australia	Confirmed	2020 presentation deferred to 2021 owing to COVID-19 closures
Various - students	VCE Showcase 2021	22 October – 28 November 2021	Schools, SAM	Confirmed	Working with SAM to ensure regional approach to VCE programming
The Tactile Subject (Benalla)	Nick Selentisch	3 December 2021 – 27 February 2022	Direct with the artist	Confirmed	Deferred and expanded due to COVID-19 closures, scheduled for holidays due to interactivity and family programming potential
TBC - commissioned	Bush Divaan	August – 16 October 2022	4a Centre for Contemporary Asian Art	Confirmed	Deferred due to COVID-19 impacts on 4a development of project, commissioned contemporary works in response to Benalla's Siva Singh story

Simpson Gallery:

ARTIST	TITLE	DATES	PARTNERSHIP	STATUS	NOTES
Kirstin Berg	Still in Love with the World	3 July 2020 – 17 January 2021	Direct with artist	Completed	Dates extended due to COVID-19 closures
Damien Shen	A Stone from Another Mountain	22 January – 21 March 2021	PHOTO 2021 Festival, [MARS] Gallery, Direct with artist	Completed	Dates shifted due to COVID-19 closures, official exhibition in PHOTO 2021 program
Sidney Nolan	Drought Photographs	26 March – 18 April 2021	Internal	Current	Proposed to thematically align with Street Art exhibition
Ralph Bristow, Frank Burgers, and Anthea Kemp	Northern Abstraction	23 April – 27 June 2021	Direct with artist	Confirmed	Local / regional artist engagement
Kim Westcott	TBC	2 July – 3 October 2021	Direct with artist	Confirmed	Local / regional artist engagement
Pennie Jagiello, Katie West, Nora Thamthanakorn, Makiko Ryujin, Joungmee Do	Temporal Artefacts	8 October – 12 December 2021	Craft Victoria	Confirmed	Contemporary craft
Pauline Fraser	TBC	17 December 2021 – 13 February 2022	Direct with artist	Confirmed	Local / regional artist engagement
Various – Benalla Art Gallery Collection	The Human Figure	May – June 2022	Internal	Confirmed	Exhibition deferred due to COVID-19 closures

Online:

ARTIST	TITLE	DATES	PARTNERSHIP	STATUS	NOTES
Various - students	VCE Showcase 2020	30 October – 6 December 2020	Schools	Completed	Shifted to online delivery owing to COVID-19 closures and impact on schools ability to support development of significant body of works for physical display
Various – Benalla Art Gallery Collection and 15 paired contemporary artists	TBC	TBC – early 2021	NETS Victoria, Jessica Clark (curator)	Confirmed	Funded NETS Victoria program providing employment to independent curators as a response to COVID-19. Benalla Art Gallery supported NETS' application and are as such working with curator Jessica Clark who will pair 15 key landscape works from Collection with works by contemporary Indigenous artists in order to create new conversations, exhibition to be presented online

Attachment: [Exhibition report](#)

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

3. Acquisition proposal

SF/1742

Eric Nash – Director, Benalla Art Gallery

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides a recommendation for acquisition of artworks for the Benalla Art Gallery Collection.

Date 31 March 2021

Works Michael COOK

INVASION (BEACH GRUBS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm

INVASION (GIANT BIRDS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm

INVASION (GIANT LIZARDS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm

INVASION (KANGAROO) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm

INVASION (UFO POSSUMS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 9 of 10
81 × 120 cm

Cost

None. The work is being offered by the artist as a donation through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program.

Provenance

The work is being offered as a donation directly from the artist with communication through his representative, Andrew Baker.

Biography

Michael COOK
Born: 25 August 1968, Brisbane
Heritage: Bidjara people of south-west Queensland

Michael Cook is an Australian art photographer who was born in 1968. He worked commercially in Australia and overseas for twenty-five years before he began to make art photography in 2009, driven by an increasingly urgent desire to explore issues of identity. He is of mixed ancestry – some of which is Indigenous – and works from an Australian base.

His photographic series are unique in their approach, evocatively recreating incidents that emerge from colonial history. His images unite the historical with the imaginary, the political with the personal.

Images are unusual in their construction, created in a manner more akin to painting than the traditional photographic studio or documentary model. He begins with an idea, using photographic layering to build the image to provide aesthetic depth and each series explores an enigmatic narrative. While his earliest work was set in the Australian outback or beach environments, newer series, such as “*Object*” (2015), speak to a European cultural heritage and a universal experience of dispossession and displacement.

Cook’s career has been on an upward trajectory since the launch of his first art series, “*Through My Eyes*” (2010). Since then, his work has been included in major exhibitions all over the world. These include the *7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* (Brisbane, 2013) and *19th Biennale of Sydney* (2014). His series “*Object*” (2015) was shown at the *2015 Venice Biennale* as part of *Personal Structures: Crossing Borders* at Palazzo Mora. In 2015 his work was part of *Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisation* at the British Museum.

His work was also included in *Lifelines: Indigenous Contemporary Art from Australia*, curated by the Musées de la Civilisation in Québec, Canada and *Artist and Empire: (En)countering Colonial Legacies*, Tate/National Gallery Singapore, Singapore (both 2016). It was also part of *Taba Naba: Australie, Océanie, arts des peuples de la mer*, at the Musée Océanographique de Monaco in 2016.

His series “*Mother*” was launched at Art Basel Hong Kong in 2016 and speaks to the importance of the matriarch in cultures across the ages. In 2018 his work was part of *Mapping Australia: Country to Cartography*, AAMU, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht, Netherlands. In 2019 his work was part of *Cape Town Art Fair* in South Africa, a country which shares Australia’s challenges with its colonial past. His work has been shown at the Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, and he was represented at Art Basel Hong Kong again in 2019.

In 2020 Cook was selected for Paris Photo New York with “*Living the Dream*” (before the art fair was cancelled due to COVID-19). His first major survey exhibition titled *Michael Cook: Undiscovered* was launched in 2020 with a hardcover monograph at the new University of the Sunshine Coast Gallery, Queensland.

Cook’s photographs are represented in all major Australian collections, and in significant international collections including the British Museum, London, The Museum of World Cultures, Netherlands, Museum of Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Utrecht, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, and the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, USA.

Visually striking, technically complex and sensitively inventive, Cook’s images occupy a new space in the artistic imagination and are featured in publications all over the world.

Courtesy: michaelcook.net.au

Work Under Consideration:



Michael COOK
INVASION (BEACH GRUBS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm



Michael COOK
INVASION (GIANT BIRDS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm



Michael COOK
INVASION (GIANT LIZARDS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm



Michael COOK
INVASION (KANGAROO) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 6 of 10
81 × 120 cm



Michael COOK
INVASION (UFO POSSUMS) 2017
Inkjet print, Edition 9 of 10
81 × 120 cm

Statement of Significance

Louise Martin-Chew proclaims *Invasion* as “Cook’s most ambitious project to date — a full year in production, with a cast and crew to rival a small film, and a subliminal text that speaks to a narrative shape distinct from the usual storyline. What is notable about an initial encounter with this series of eight images is their chorus of detail and ironic look back, with tongue firmly in cheek, to B-grade movies of the past.” Of each work, Martin-Chew explains:

INVASION (BEACH GRUBS)

Invasion (Beach grubs) shows witchetty grubs of gigantic proportions arriving on a pebbly beach on the Thames, falling in the water and bouncing on the land with violence. Yet amid the chaos and wanton destruction, with the malevolent presence of UFOs in the distant sky, a tall Aboriginal alien carries a young woman to safety, and another is assisted up the ladder from the beach. These actions echo the kindness and relationships struck-up between individuals, Indigenous and European, since the beginnings of their shared history.

INVASION (GIANT BIRDS)

Invasion (Giant birds) captures the spectrum of British society — a young woman, pregnant and well-dressed, whose waters break beneath her terror; children running or sheltering behind the stair balustrade; a young man whose girlfriend has fallen on the stairs behind him — all fleeing. The setting is Bank Station in the historic city. A bronze statue in the background commemorates the Duke of Wellington on horseback (Australia’s significant culture, with some 60,000 years of history, has not correspondingly been commemorated).

INVASION (GIANT LIZARDS)

Invasion (Giant lizards) refers to Alfred Hitchcock’s iconic *The Birds* (1963), with a school group pursued by three colossal lizards.

INVASION (KANGAROO)

Invasion (Kangaroo) takes us into the heart of London streets — the road dividing tenement housing on the left from the high-end shops on the right. A kangaroo, taller than a human, shoots its laser eyes into a man whose arms are outstretched with agony — an echo of Jesus on the cross. Beams are directed between the flying objects overhead and the street, with children being sucked away from their mothers on the ground. Their disappearance is clandestine, just discernible in the beam; although the fallout on the street, the pram lying on its side and panic-stricken women, suggests the ricochet to come (the removal of children from Aboriginal families was actively practised in Australia between 1869 and 1970).

INVASION (UFO POSSUMS)

Invasion (UFO possums) is sited back on the Thames, with young children fleeing the arrival of the strange furry animals. They are symptomatic of strange creatures brought to Britain as specimens for study, which included Aboriginals like Bennelong (c.1764–1813) who was brought to London by Captain Arthur Philip in 1792.

Cook's iconic *Invasion* series flows naturally from his *Majority Rule* series of 2014, which was a key inclusion in the National Gallery of Victoria's significant *Colony: Frontier Wars* exhibition. Works from *Invasion* were also represented in *Defining Place/Space: Contemporary Photography from Australia*, at the Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego, including as the key catalogue image.

This acquisition would complement emerging and existing collection strengths in both contemporary Australian photography, and contemporary work by Aboriginal artists, and as such provides large scope for inclusion in curated exhibitions from the Collection. Potential exhibition relationships exist with works by artists such as Siri Hayes, Polixeni Papapetrou, Tim Maguire, Patricia Piccinini, Fiona Foley, Leah King-Smith, Brook Andrew, and also with the work by Tracey Moffatt already approved and being processed as part of the Doug Kagi Gift.

These works also speak broadly to an experience of colonisation and dispossession which bears direct relevance to Benalla.

This acquisition meets the following criteria of the Gallery's Acquisition Policy:

- *Collecting will be focused according to the following broad aspirations:*
- *To build on existing strengths and identify areas for collection development;*
- *To acquire iconic works of enduring significance and impact;*
- *To acquire exemplary works which demonstrate new modes of practice; or exemplify key moments in art history;*
- *To promote opportunities for exhibition-related acquisitions and commissions*

Additional Costs:

Costs of two valuations to comply with requirements of the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, and art freight from Brisbane on scheduled Victorian run, estimate \$1,000 total.

Recommendation:
That the offer of acquisition be accepted.

4. Benalla Art Gallery future development

SF/1742
Barbara Alexander, Chair
Dom Testoni, Chief Executive Officer

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report presents an update on the future development of the Benalla Art Gallery.

Recommendation:

That the report be noted.

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5. Meeting schedule 2021

SF/1742
Barbara Alexander, Chair

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The report provides a schedule of meetings for the remainder of 2021.

DISCUSSION

In accordance with Item 16 of the Terms of Reference for the Benalla Art Gallery Committee, the Chair will convene such meetings of the Committee as are, in his or her opinion, necessary for the efficient conduct of its affairs and shall convene at least four meetings of the Committee each calendar year.

Proposed meeting dates for the remainder of 2021:

Tuesday 15 June 2021 - 5pm

Tuesday 14 September 2021 - 5pm

Tuesday 16 November 2021 - 5pm

Recommendation:

That the schedule of meetings be accepted.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 15 June
Time: 5pm
Venue: Benalla Art Gallery