

Dance Me *to the* End *of* Love

Journeys from birth to death
in the SAM Collection

Education
Resource

sam

Shepparton Art Museum



Dance Me to the End of Love: Journeys from birth to death in the SAM Collection

18 March 2023 to February 2024

***Dance Me to the End of Love* evokes the grand cycles of life, traversing from birth to death through artworks in the SAM Collection. Spanning one hundred and twenty years, the diverse selection of artworks includes ceramics, sculpture, painting, printmaking, drawing, assemblage, and installation.**

From their individual perspectives the thirty-nine artists in *Dance Me to the End of Love* share stories of a life lived and delve into connective experiences of creation, parenthood, spiritualism, life seasons, death, and the afterlife. The artists capture emotions and encounters that can be difficult to describe in words but through art can transcend language barriers to unravel the mysteries, delights, and sorrows of life that are universal.

The exhibition's title comes from a song of the same name by Canadian poet, singer-songwriter and artist Leonard Cohen. It is a sensuous, sad song that moves through the layers of life in a bewildering world. His poetic lyrics capture the contradictions of the human experience—from ominous to yearning, haunting to sweet, dark to light—which echoes through the artworks in this exhibition.

Curator – Jessica O'Farrell

SAM recognises the Yorta Yorta as the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the lands and water of the Country upon which SAM is built. We pay our respect to elders past, present and emerging.

***Dance Me to the End of Love* includes artworks from the following artists:**

Janet Beckhouse	Esther Kennedy
Sarah Boehme	David Larwill
Peter Booth	Elizabeth Moketarinja
Godwin Bradbeer	Hedwig Moketarinja
Penny Byrne	Elaine Namatjira
Katthy Cavaliere	Nell
Yvonne Cohen	Ann Newmarch
Julie Dowling	Trevor Nickolls
Dulcie Enalanga	Ramesh Mario
Ida Engalanga	Nithiyendran
Irene Entata	Kathleen Petyarre
Janet Fieldhouse	Hugh Ramsay
Mark Galea	Carol Rontji
Norah Gurdon	Virginia Rontji
Stanislav Halpern	Judi Singleton
Brent Harris	Sally Smart
John Loane	Long Tom Tjapanangka
Noreen Hudson	Angela Valamanesh
Judith Inkamala	Hossein Valamanesh
Sam Jinks	Maggie Watson

This education kit is designed to guide educators and students through the exhibition. It covers the key concepts in the exhibition *Dance Me to the End of Love* and highlights artworks within the show.

For each theme there are discussion questions to help prompt conversation when viewing the artworks.

Additionally, there are activities for the classroom to help dive into themes further with your students back at school.

Cover image:
Janet Beckhouse, *She Who Cheats the Hand of Death*, 2005,
glazed stoneware
Shepparton Art Museum Collection. © the artists estate



Hermannsburg Potters, *Palm Valley - The Twins Dreaming*, 1994
 terracotta
 Shepparton Art Museum Collection, purchased with the assistance
 of the Australia Council and Joseph Pascoe, 1995.
 Image credit: Leon Schoots 2023

Creation

This mural depicts part of the story of the twin boys born in a waterhole in Palm Valley at a place called Itaratara. One was fat, his name was Rengkaraka and the other was skinny, his name was Ratara.

Their mother watched over them as they learned to crawl and then to walk. She gathered bush food (Tjapa – witchetty-grubs, Rratninga – wild passion fruit, Yalka – wild onion, Tjurka – wild fig) and picked Akia berries (a kind of black berry). She took them out of the valley across the Finke river past Mt Hermannsburg to the open sand dunes outside of the valley which is Ntaria.

As told by Denis Ebatarinja the Kutangula (Custodian)

The Hermannsburg Potters are a group of artists from the Western Arrarnta (Arrernte) community of Central Australia. They are known for their terracotta vessels with brightly coloured, hand-painted narratives that tell of their Country, history, and cultural beliefs.

As well as a strong creation story, this work is also unusual as it is a flattened, panoramic work. The individual tiles were sculpted and then painted in underglaze. This three-dimensional surface is uniquely different to the Hermannsburg potters' renowned pots and vessels.

Twelve women artists collaborated to make this work, under the direction of Denis Ebatarinja, the Kutangula (Custodian) of this story. This work is simultaneously a story about home, family, Country, and instructions on how to gather food.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What is in the background of the artwork?
- What is in the foreground of the artwork?
- What is in the midground of the artwork?
- What are the people doing in the artwork?

MAKE: A Collaborative mural – What makes a place special to you?

Select a common location that all students can contribute to such as your school or surrounding areas.

Discuss as a class:

- What makes this landscape special? Is it the wild life, architecture, a place that you play with friends?
- What do you see in the background?
- What do you see in the foreground?
- What do you see in the midground?

Create

As a class make a collaborative landscape drawing of the selected location.

- Divide the class into three groups. Each group will be responsible for drawing different area of the landscape – foreground, midground and background.
- Hand out a square to each student. (These sections will come together to create one large image)
- Once completed, come together as a class and join the squares to make one larger drawing.

Materials needed: Sketching paper, 10cm squares of paper, A3 backing cardboard, pencils/textas.

**MAKE variation:* Each student draws a landscape they have selected or can see, including background, midground and foreground.

Yvonne Cohen
Mother and Child, c.1965
oil on board
Shepparton Art Museum,
donated by the artists estate, 2004.
Image credit: Shepparton Art Museum



Parenthood

Yvonne Cohen was born in 1914 and is a notable artist from the Melbourne Modernist movement. This work is typical of this movement- with rich colours, simplified shapes and a strong, balanced composition. The Melbourne Modernists movement was significant as many of its contributing artists were women, who challenged the male-dominated art trends of the time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What elements make this a modernist work? Consider the colours, shapes and forms used.
- Where do you think the mother and child are standing?
- Look carefully – the background is two different shades of yellow. One light, one dark, in horizontal stripes. Why did the artist choose to do this?



Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran
Ganesh 3, 2015
glazed earthenware with gold lustre
Shepparton Art Museum Collection, 2015 Sidney Myer Fund
Australian Ceramic Award - Winner, 2015.
Image credit: Shepparton Art Museum 2020

Spirituality

Spirituality is the search for meaning and understanding of our place in the universe. It explores our innate human curiosity, and the questions we ponder – why are things the way they are? Who will help us on our way? What lies beyond the here and now? These artworks span a variety of mediums and share a focus on finding greater meaning.

Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran explores global histories and artistic approaches to figurative representation, primarily through his ceramic practice. His vibrant sculptures investigate themes of idols, gender, race, sexuality, and religion.

Ganesh 3 is part of an installation of ceramic sculptures that draws upon Nithiyendran's heritage, spiritual beliefs and interest in pop culture.

This iteration of the Hindu God of Beginnings is an iridescent white ceramic with gold details.

The artist states that "central to all the work is a sense of these materials performing themselves to extreme states. Exaggeration and hyperbole is a conceit and tool in my work."¹

¹A. Briers, 'Archipelago', in Babington, J. ed. *Ramesh: The genre-defying sculptures of contemporary artist Ramesh Mario Nithiyendran*, Thames and Hudson, 2023, pp.193

Janet Beckhouse
She Who Cheats the Hand of Death, 2005
glazed stoneware
Shepparton Art Museum
Collection, donated through
the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program by
Clayton Beckhouse
in memory of Janet
Beckhouse, 2022.
Image credit: Shepparton
Art Museum



Life Seasons

Janet Beckhouse was a highly celebrated contemporary ceramicist who rejoiced in creating intricate sculptural forms.

She Who Cheats the Hand of Death was one of the artist's most treasured artworks, held in her private collection until her recent passing. This sculpture presents a mythical female figure crowned in an elaborate headdress of coral, shells, sea snakes, and skulls. This arrangement is mirrored on the reverse—only here, instead of the woman's face, sits a skull.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What different natural forms can you see?
- What do these forms and elements remind you of?
- Why do you think one side shows a face and the other a skull?
- When you move around the work, do you think the artwork also changes meaning?
- What does the work remind you of?

MAKE: An Exquisite Corpse

- Divide students into groups of 3.
- Dividing the paper into 3, each group member is to draw different element of a figure inspired by the artist's work.
- Starting with the head, then body, concluding with the legs and feet, each student is to draw their element, folding the paper to cover their work before giving it to the next participant.
- Once all 3 elements are completed, reveal the unique artwork!

Materials needed: paper, pencil and clipboard.

Penny Byrne
The Four Horsemen of the 21st Century Apocalypse, 2009
 Found ceramic, re-touching medium, powder pigments, epoxy resin, lentils, corn, rice, kidney beans, glass, silicone, metal and plastic.
 Shepparton Art Museum Collection, purchased, 2009.
 Image credit: Shepparton Art Museum



Social Issues

Penny Byrne creates sculptures that, on closer inspection, reveal themselves to be darkly humorous.² Her satirical viewpoints confront contemporary political and social issues, with a particular focus on the impact of humanity on the environment. Byrne's training as a conservator strongly influences her practice. Working with found objects, particularly ceramics, Byrne meticulously manipulates and reconstructs them into new figurines.

This artwork taps into Byrne's concerns surrounding climate change and the vulnerability of our planet. Each horse and rider are styled to reflect threats to human existence in the 21st century—water shortages, peak oil, food scarcity, and overpopulation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Why do you think the artist choose these forms for the riders?
- What emotions does this work evoke? Why? What elements cause these emotions?
- Do you agree that these futures foretold by the horsemen will happen? Why?
- Pick one detail. What role does it play in the atmosphere of this work?

MAKE: A Symbolic Sculpture

Inspired by Penny Byrne, design a sculpture that highlights a current issue that concerns you.

- Consider an issue that is relevant to you – is it environmental? Is it human rights issue?
- What elements, symbols or materials could you use to express your issue?

Make your plan:

- Start with an outline of a larger sculpture, like a rider and their horse, or maybe a monument in a town square. What elements would you adorn the sculpture with, and why? Draw, write and plan how your work will come together.
- Once completed, present your idea to the class. What other ideas can your class give you to help advocate for your issue?

2. D. Pettifer, 'Penny Byrne: The Four Horsemen of the 21st Century Apocalypse', in R. Coates & S. Gory eds., *Eighty Years of SAM: The Collection*, Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton, 2017, pp. 60-61.



Nell
Every Mummy has a Mummy, 2014,
 wood, synthetic polymer paint, enamel paint, varnish, steel, paper,
 aluminium foil, oil paint, fabric, synthetic hair, clay, ink, sunglasses.
 Shepparton Art Museum Collection, donated through the Australian
 Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Dr Terry Wu, 2021.
 Image credit: Leon Schoots, 2023

Afterlife

Afterlife showcases different artists' investigations into what comes after the end. Both playful and serious, the final section in the exhibition is a dazzling, nuanced take on these grand imaginings of the afterlife.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Nell made this sculpture inspired by ancient Egyptian death rituals and her love of rock music.
- Can you see how she has combined both in this sculpture? What elements belong to ancient Egypt? What things are from rock music? What things are both?
- What did this Mummy do in their lifetime? What happened to them? Where did they live?

Glossary

Abstract

Art that does not attempt to represent real life, but rather seeks to achieve its effect using shapes, colours, and textures.

Apocalypse

An event resulting in devastating or catastrophic destruction.

Background

The background is the part of the artwork composition that is behind the main subject of the artwork.

Ceramic

An object made of clay and permanently hardened by heat.

Foreground

The foreground is the part of the artwork composition that is closest to the viewer.

Glaze

A glass coating on ceramics. It can be colourful, clear, glossy, matte or textured.

Collage

A collection or combination of various things.

Collaboration

The action of working with someone to produce something.

Conceptualism

An art practice where the idea or concept behind the artwork is more important than how the artwork itself looks.

Iconography

The visual images and symbols used in a work of art or the study or interpretation of these.

Implicative

The conclusion that can be drawn from something although it is not explicitly stated.

Landscape

A depiction of a nature scene usually including trees, mountains and rivers.

Midground or middle ground

Midground is the space between the background and the foreground; it is the middle part of the composition.

Mixed-media

Many different types of materials and media in one artwork.

Modernism

An art movement that was a reaction to industrialisation, and the trauma of the World Wars. Started approximately 1914 and ran until approximately 1950.

Mural

An artwork that is painted or applied directly on a wall.

Narrative

A story or account of an event.

Omnipresence

Present everywhere and anywhere.

Panoramic

A wide-angle view of a space or landscape.

Surrealism/surrealists/surreal

A 20th-century movement in art and literature that was concerned with and driven by the creative potential of the unconscious mind.

Symbolism/symbolists/symbols

A mark, sign or image that is used by an artist to represent another object, figure or idea.

Underglaze

Pigment that survives firing in a kiln.

Victorian Curriculum Outcomes

Foundation:

- Respond to visual artworks and consider where and why people make visual artworks
- Experiment with different materials and techniques to make artworks

Foundation to Level 10:

- Explore the visual arts practices and styles as inspiration to develop a personal style, explore, express ideas, concepts and themes in art works
- Explore how artists manipulate materials, techniques, technologies and processes to develop and express their intentions in art works
- Select and manipulate materials, techniques, and technologies and processes in a range of art forms to express ideas, concepts and themes
- Analyse and interpret artworks to explore the different forms of expression, intentions and viewpoints of artists and how they are viewed by audiences
- Conceptualise, plan and design artworks that express ideas, concepts and artistic intentions
- Analyse, interpret and evaluate a range of visual artworks from different cultures, historical and contemporary contexts, including artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to explore differing viewpoints

VCE Art Creative Practice: Unit 3 Outcome 1

- Research and analyse the ideas and issues explored by artists in their practice.

VCE Art Making and Exhibiting: Area of Study 2 (Expand - make, present and reflect)

- The use of materials, techniques and processes used to make artworks in specific art forms
- Characteristics and properties of materials in finished artworks in specific art forms
- Techniques used to develop subject matter and represent ideas in finished artworks
- The use of visual language in finished artworks

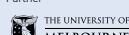
Visual Communication Design: Outcome 3

- Social and cultural factors that influence the design of visual communications, such as religion, community values and politics
- Describe visual communications in terms of their social and cultural settings identify the connections between past and contemporary visual communications practices

Government Partners



Learning & Engagement Partner



sheppartonartmuseum.com.au Shepparton Art Museum