

Goulburn Regional Art Gallery presents

31 march – 10 june 2023

Soft Power



Karla Dickens, Julia Gutman, Nadia Hernández,
Mehwish Iqbal, Kate Just and Raquel Ormella

Education Kit



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Soft Power

Soft Power shows the diverse ways Australian artists use textiles to investigate social, cultural and political issues of our time. The exhibition presents the works of six Australian artists who each embrace textiles in order to send a message. These works explore a range of themes including environmentalism, feminism and power.

This exhibition celebrates textiles as a powerful medium which holds memory, with many artists incorporating materials that have close connections to their lived experience. These works have an embedded intimacy, embodied with time, care, skill and labour and constructed from elements collected, recycled, worn and transformed. Embracing a variety of techniques including knitting, assemblage and embroidery, *Soft Power* features works enmeshed with history and meaning.

The exhibiting artists are:

Karla Dickens, Julia Gutman, Nadia Hernández, Mehwish Iqbal, Kate Just and Raquel Ormella.

About the Education Kit

This Education Kit has been developed for *Soft Power* at the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery from 31 March to 10 June 2023 and prepared by Kirsten Jeffcoat, Education Officer. Jeffcoat is an experienced Visual Arts Teacher with degrees in Education and Visual Arts including a Masters from the University of Paris VIII. She has taught at Primary, High School and Tertiary institutions including the Sorbonne University in France. Jeffcoat has worked as Education Officer at the NCA and the National Gallery of Australia and is also a practicing artist.

The kit contains informative text about the artists and their works and includes practical activities designed for audiences of all ages. The kit is suitable for use before, during and after visiting the Gallery.

A digital copy is also available on the Gallery's website.

Themes and Influences

The exhibition highlights the following themes:

- The use of textiles as a medium in contemporary artmaking.
- How materials can be recycled and used in different contexts to create meaning.
- Contemporary Australian artists who respond to their world in a variety of ways.
- How artists comment on social, environmental and personal issues through their artmaking.

Objectives

As a part of viewing the exhibition and completing the activities in this Education kit, students will:

- Gain an understanding of how artists use art to express ideas and communicate with their audience.
- Identify that artists use a variety of materials, techniques and disciplines to convey ideas, feelings and emotions.
- Discuss and respond to art in a variety of forms.
- Gain a greater knowledge of how artists respond to their world in a variety of ways.
- Consider the relationship that exists between the artwork, artist, gallery and audience.
- Understand how contemporary artists can be influenced by personal, social, cultural and environmental issues in their artmaking.

About the exhibition

Find-a-word

Can you find the names of the artists from the exhibition in the find-a-word below? First and last names appear separately.

Karla Dickens

Julia Gutman

Nadia Hernandez

Mehwish Iqbal

Kate Just

Raquel Ormella

X X Z U L L S V N C G U H V F B O U N H
Z V O X O K J S Q L U V X M E E E V G P
F H I P M K L W L Z A K R A Q U E L G X
J E N R S C O F J X D G H J A V D Z S Q
M P V O V Z B T X S A H E Y B J Y M O N
Z B N R Q A B K A Q S L R H D Y B B W M
F Y I D B A P X L J N L N U B P V S E X
O J C Y J T L J L F P Z A A F S C H F D
V E V Z C X B F E H Y S N A C K W H O Q
I J S X F P X T M C A T D X A I F D V H
Q R H J F K V L R E F Y E G S A Y C L I
B T T U H I U E O S Z L Z H L Y C N F H
A W O S S Z I S N R J K H R K I K W R G
L D R T J E A E N C F U A S N E Z T A S
I H G G V M K H F A O K L T H E O K Y B
J C U L D C X T O K M A R I E Z G A W G
I D Y U I M J N P Q I T P K A B R J D U
P U L D M N J Q B D Q Z U N H R A T P Q
O Y P B B D H Q A W S Y Y G H F O P H Y
W T I I D U K N Y J J V T G H H G O H R

Textile Techniques:

- **Stitching:** using thread to join pieces of fabric or other materials together or for decoration either by machine or by hand.
- **Embroidery:** uses colourful threads and different kinds of stitches to create decorations on textiles.
- **Dyeing:** using natural or chemical processes to modify the colour of textiles.
- **Printing:** is used to make designs or repetitive patterns on fabrics. Techniques include block printing, silk-screen printing, photographic silk-screen printing, or wax resist techniques. Etchings and collographs can be included in **mixed media** works. These are works in which more than one medium or material has been used.
- **Weaving:** is a method of textile production in which two distinct sets of yarns or threads are interlaced at right angles to form a fabric or cloth.
- **Knitting:** is a method of making textile fabrics by interlacing yarn loops with loops of the same or other yarns. It may be done by hand with knitting needles or by machine.
- **Appliqué:** is done by sewing fabric shapes to a larger background textile.
- **Patchwork:** uses small pieces of fabric that are sewn together to make a whole.
- **Collage:** is made of found objects or fabricated pieces either glued or stitched onto material.
- **Felting:** is the process of connecting or blending wool or fibre together to make a fabric. It involves matting, condensing and pressing fibres together.
- **Painting:** can be done directly onto fabric for unique pieces.
- **Gold leaf:** Gold leaf is gold that has been hammered into thin sheets by goldbeating and is often used for gilding. It can be applied to textiles.
Gold paint, powder or gold thread can also be used on textiles.

Unscramble the letters below

BYDOEERRIM -----
 LEOCGAL -----
 ÉPLPUQIA -----
 EXLTETI -----
 KNTTIING -----
 TISITCGNH -----
 YED ---

Activity Match the techniques to the artworks in *Soft Power*.

Look closely at the labels accompanying each artwork. They will tell you the materials used but not always the technique employed. Looking at the artworks, see if you can work out what technique has been used. Join the techniques to the artworks below.

TECHNIQUE	ARTWORK
Embroidery	<i>De lo que somos (Of what we are)</i>
Knitting	<i>Golly Fucking Gosh II</i>
Patchwork	<i>Gulistan</i>
Collage	<i>Anonymous was a woman</i>
Appliqué	<i>Blockade in the studio, Stop Adani</i>
Collage and Embroidery	<i>Once More with Feeling</i>

Karla Dickens

born on Gadigal Land/ Sydney, NSW, 1967

Contemporary visual artist and poet Karla Dickens is of Wiradjuri, Irish and German heritage .

The artwork included in this exhibition *Golly Fucking Gosh II* (2021) is part of Karla Dickens' ongoing series *A Dickensian Circus*. This series explores histories and narratives of Indigenous people involved in Australian circus shows, side shows and tent-boxing troupes between the 1920s and 1950s, who travelled the country as 'entertainers' for primarily white audiences at fairs and carnivals. The works in this series comprise of everyday items and memorabilia which the artist has collected over the years and assembled into powerful compositions. Dickens' potent works remind us that these histories are linked to contemporary notions of pride, womanhood, racism, incarceration, dispossession, resistance and defiance.

Activity:

1) What recycled objects can you see in Karla Dickens' artwork?

2) How does this work make you feel? _____

3) What histories or beliefs is the artist challenging? _____

Symbolic objects



Image: Karla Dickens, *Golly Fucking Gosh II*, 2021, mixed media. Silversalt Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Station Gallery.

‘cross-cultural Wiradjuri woman Karla Dickens brings a black humour to her unflinching interrogation of subjects such as race, gender and injustice, revealing her often raw pain along the way.’

<https://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/dickens-karla/>

<https://c-a-c.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Karla-Dickens-Education-kit.pdf>

For more information about Karla Dickens’ work in the series *A Dickensian Circus* follow the above links.

Friendship



Image: Julia Gutman, *Once More with Feeling*, 2022 , (artist pictured with the work).
Donated textiles and embroidery, metal chain. Image courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf.

Activity Look closely at this artwork and answer the following questions:

1) What is the size of this work? _____

2) How many figures or people can you see? _____

3) What do you think the figures are doing? _____

4) Over the past couple of years we have had to spend time indoors with our family. What did you do during these times? _____

Julia Gutman

born Bindal and Wulgurukaba Country/Townsville, Australia 1989

Once More with Feeling 2022

Donated textiles and embroidery, metal chain

‘I reuse found textiles to produce ‘patchworks’ that merge personal and collective histories with canonical paintings. The work is made almost entirely out of clothing worn and donated by my friends. Compositionally, they riff on textbook examples from the western history of painting, particularly representations of women configured through the male gaze. I like to insert myself and my friends into these images, inverting the subject object relationship, giving us a sense of agency and power.

My process is labour intensive, but it isn’t precious. The edges are rough, the seams are wonky and the image is frayed all over. I like taking my time, but I think there is something a little punk about them too. Sewing, at least the way that I do it, is at once incredibly tender and inarguably aggressive. I am bringing together disparate things, mending, but violently puncturing them to do so. My interrogation of textiles is a sort of negotiation with femininity, tradition and expectation. It’s this playful toeing the line. In terms of materiality, the specificity of the fabric that I use informs the stories that I tell. Trace is something I think about a lot. These small pieces of my friend’s lived experience help build a narrative of collectivity and community.’ - Julia Gutman, 2023

This work not only visually represents Julia Gutman and her friends but it is made from the worn clothing of the artist’s friends and family as the fabric used in the patchwork. Do you think the chain which suspends the work in the Gallery is also used symbolically to represent friendship and connections? Yes/No

Further Research

What is a Canonical Painting? _____

Research and make a collage of past paintings showing three women.

Nadia Hernández

born Merida, Venezuela 1987.

‘One of the ways in which I experience and understand my Venezuelan identity is through the connection I hold with members of my family. Despite our physical distance, it is through conversations, anecdotes and the sharing of memories that I have built an understanding of my *Venezolanidad*, as a member of the diaspora living in Australia.

I find it difficult to summarise the extreme devastation that has occurred in my home country over the past twenty years. I guess finding *maneras* (ways) to maintain this conversation is a form of resistance; one particularly invested in the methodical iteration of infinite dialogues or lived experiences. I’m exploring what it means to make work that is collaborative, by incorporating my family members as a way of telling our collective stories. This has led to a process of translating words into visuals, visuals into poetry, poetry into resistance, and resistance into energy transmitted and shared.

These works ... capture passing conversations between me and my *abuela*, extracts from poems written by my *abuelo* many years ago, recipes passed down from one matriarch to the next. Scenes captured on an iPhone from our day-to-day phone calls, snapshots of times that are no longer, looking for significance in every moment, as a way to continue redefining our *querencia* (sense of strength). Why do these moments hold so much significance? An easy answer would be to dwell on their sentimentality, but I assure you there’s something more – a form of wisdom, passed down generationally, worthy of circulation. Somehow these slithers of text, thoughts, and ingredients, haphazard in their meaning, allow me and my family to retain an aspect of our *cotidianidad* (everydayness). We may be geographically apart but our spiritual connection remains intact.’

- Nadia Hernández , 2022

Appliqué



Image: Nadia Hernández in her studio. Image: courtesy of the artist and Station Gallery.
Photograph: Gavin Green

Activity: Using some of the same art materials as Nadia Hernández—acrylic paint, marker, cotton, linen, rope, ribbon—create an artwork based on conversations and experiences you have had with your friends and family. Include shapes, images, words and letters.

Cut these out and make an appliqué or patchwork of them by joining them together in an interesting and colourful way.

Mehwish Iqbal

born Sangla Hill, Pakistan 1981

Gulistan 2022

etching, collograph, silk screen, hand embroidery

‘My work always draws upon parallels between historic events, their imposition and manipulation of current geo/political dynamics. The growth of oppressive regimes, eradicates autonomous voices creating a foundation upon which upheaval is propagated, leading to abnormal migration trends that further pose challenges to treatment of human agency in foreign landscapes.

Gulistan (2022) encompasses a strong discourse around the experiences of individuals whose life is shaped by stringent policies, war, famine, disease and climate change. Families are on a constant move for bare survival and their communities exist on the edge integrating and disintegrating according to the law and policies of the land. In a wider context it becomes a pivotal point of discussion drawing our attention to the dichotomy of power between various polarised states. This particular work takes direct inspiration from the natural environment by cultivating characteristics of the animal world into human psyche, thus, integrating an anthropomorphic lens’

- Mehwish Iqbal, 2023

Activity: How can you represent aspects of your life and culture in Art?

Using old sewing pattern paper, brown paper or a photocopied drawing, stitch and embroider the paper carefully to highlight the aspects of the drawing that convey your story. Collage other items onto the background.

Image opposite: Mehwish Iqbal, *Gulistan*, 2022, etching, collograph, silk screen, hand embroidery. Silversalt Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Yavuz Gallery.

Stitching

Look at the different types of embroidery stitches and the variety of threads used in this artwork. Some examples of stitches used include:

- Chain stitch. Straight stitch. Running: over under with a gap between.
- Back stitch to create a solid line. Blanket stitch along the edge.
- Satin stitch up and down close together. Used to block out larger areas with solid colour.
- French knot: come up from the back, wind the thread around the needle a few times and then go back through the fabric in the same place. Creates a raised knot.





Image: Kate Just. *Anonymous was a woman* (detail) 2021. 30 hand knitted panels.

Photograph: courtesy of the artist and Hugo Michell Gallery

Activity:

- 1) Count how many squares you can see in this artwork on the wall? _____
- 2) Do they all say the same thing? _____
- 3) Write the words here. _____
- 4) How many different colours can you see? _____
- 5) Name some of the colours. _____

Kate Just

Born Hartford, United States of America 1974

Anonymous was a woman is an ongoing art work that involves the repetitive production of hand knitted panels bearing the text 'Anonymous was a woman.'... Stretched around canvas, each differently coloured work resembles a textile plaque. The muted tones of the work refer to a palette of jewels or minerals, natural or long buried treasures. Assembled on the wall in a grid, the works resemble a columbarium or monument to past lives or lost artworks.

The work is inspired by a quotation in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1928). In this feminist polemic, Woolf questions the ways women's authorship has been judged as inferior to that of men, and systematically made invisible. Woolf says, "I would venture to guess that Anon, who wrote so many poems without signing them, was often a woman." Over time this quote has been rephrased as 'Throughout most of history, Anonymous was a woman.' Through the making of the work, I meditate upon the immeasurable contributions that women have made to culture and society, and mourn the losses sustained by the erasure or exclusion of many of these gifts from the canon of art history.

Each panel is comprised of over 17,000 stitches and 25 hours labour. I continuously produced two panels a week over the course of almost two years, while juggling parenting, family life and a full time job. The work was carried and produced at home, at work (including in teaching spaces and meetings), in public space, on public transportation. People witnessing the making of the work were invited to sit beside me to talk, ask questions, or discuss feminism. These discussions centred on gender, money, the art world, racism, sexuality, mothers, notable and forgotten women throughout history, forms of privilege that still prevail in feminist spaces, and the exclusions within the term woman. This knitting opened up a space to share the small details of life.'

- Kate Just, 2021

Raquel Ormella

born Gadigal land/Sydney, Australia 1969

Stripped empty 2018 Work uniforms, hi-vis fabric, cotton.

In the work *Stripped empty* Raquel Ormella re-contextualises hi-vis textiles and work uniforms to draw attention to the environmental impact of economic-driven activity, like mining. Ormella's aphorisms are both political and poetic, imploring audiences to critically reflect on activities which threaten the natural world.



Image: Raquel Ormella, *Stripped empty*, 2018, work uniforms, hi-vis fabric, cotton. Silversalt Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery.

Blockade in the studio, Stop Adani 2022

Adani is the name of a company planning to mine coal in Queensland. The embroidered panel shows a map of the north of the state. The blue rippled stitching represents the underground water which risks being polluted by the mining activity if it goes ahead. As the title implies, this is the artist's form of protesting and conveying her message through artmaking.

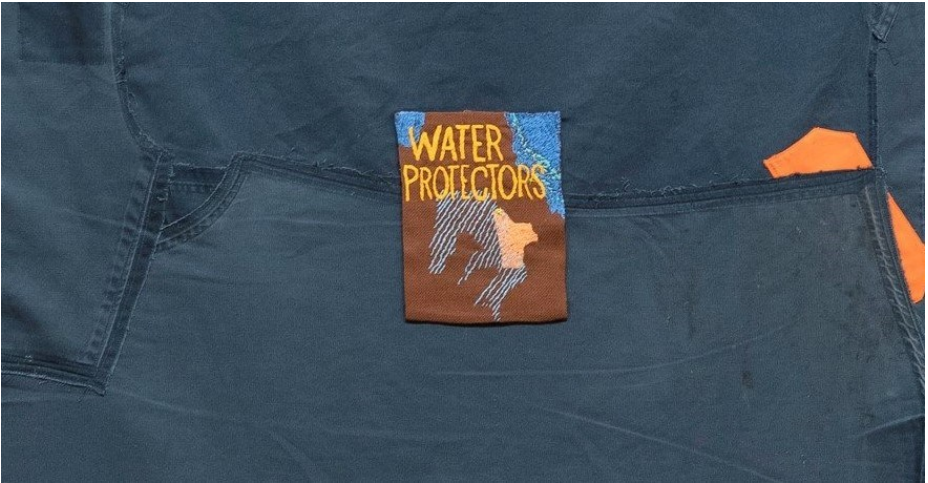


Image: Raquel Ormella, *Blockade in the studio, Stop Adani* (detail), 2022, work uniforms, cotton worker's shirts, cotton. Silversalt Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery.

Activity:

- 1) What issues do you feel strongly about?
- 2) How would you show your concern to people through images?
- 3) What materials could you use to convey your message? (For example old clothes, fabric, flags or banners)
- 4) If you could use words what would they be and how would you show them? Eg. cut them out of fabric, stitch them or collage the words on?
- 5) Design a T-shirt you could wear to show others your message.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land where the Goulburn Regional Art Gallery operates and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Front: Julia Gutman, *Once more with feeling* (detail) 2022 . Photograph: Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf .



Goulburn Regional Art Gallery is supported by the NSW government through Create NSW.