



acca education

Primary Kit

Power To The People:
Contemporary Conceptualism and the Object in Art

POWER TO THE PEOPLE



The late 1960s saw the rise of people power. Following events such as The Vietnam War, the emergence of the American civil rights movement and the riots of Paris '68, protests, sit-ins and strikes occurred as community involvement and self-determination gained momentum. People were demanding political and social change. A new artistic movement called Conceptual Art began to emerge. Artists began to move away from creating precious art objects, such as paintings and sculptures. Instead, they created installations, happenings and interactive audience projects. By removing the object, the idea becomes the artwork and your imagination brings the idea/art to life.



Today contemporary artists are revisiting and reconsidering Conceptual Art in new artworks, focusing on imagination and audience participation, sometimes even encouraging the audience to determine the outcome of the work itself.

Art that continues to be fuelled by the power of the people.



Peter Friedl

Austrian artist Peter Friedl (b. 1960) lives and works in Berlin. *Peter Friedl* (1998) is a series of animal costumes distributed around the gallery that the audience can wear as they move through the exhibition, viewing other works in the show. When we put on a costume not only do we take on a new identity, we become the art object. This changes the traditional division between the artwork and audience.

How does it feel to 'be' the art object?



Roman Ondák

Roman Ondák (b. 1966) lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia. Ondák creates art that blurs the boundaries between art and real life. *Teaching To Walk* (2002) is a daily happening in which a mother is invited to come to the gallery space and to help her baby to take its first steps. Ondák captures an important moment in the life of a human being not by creating an art object, but by bringing the actual event into an art gallery. The mother and child movement based activity becomes the art object.

Is this real life or art?



Dora Garcia

Spanish artist Dora Garcia (b. 1970) lives and works in Brussels. *Instant Narrative* (2006-08) has a writer (not the artist) seated at a desk in the space who writes a text about the visitors to the exhibition. These observations about the audience are automatically projected onto the wall of the gallery. The result is a real-time story about the audience. *Instant Narrative* alters the usual way we view artwork. The audience looks at the work, yet the work looks back, commenting on the audience and their reaction.

Who is the author of the artwork? Do you like being part of the artwork?



Natasha Johns-Messenger

Australian artist Natasha Johns-Messenger (b. 1974) currently lives and works in New York. *Yellow* (2003/2011) is a built corridor bathed in yellow light that uses mirrors to extend the space and what we can see within the ACCA gallery. As they move through the corridor, the viewer comes across window sized security footage of *Vault*, the famous yellow sculpture by Ron Robertson Swann located on the ACCA grounds, making an outside object viewable inside. The work was originally exhibited in 2003 at the VCA Margaret Lawrence gallery located on the opposite ACCA and facing the other side of the Vault sculpture.

Is this work an original or a reproduction?



Matthew Shannon

English artist Matthew Shannon (b.1980) lives and works in Melbourne. *God And The Worm* is a digital animation about the Willem de Kooning bronze sculpture, *Standing Figure* 1969/84, that exists in the garden to the rear of the National Gallery of Victoria. Shannon shows us the sculpture from angles we would never actually get to see it from. He uses the 'gods eye view' – looking vertically down on the world – and the 'worms eye view' – looking vertically up. The surface is also examined in great detail, allowing us to see the sculpture amplified. In some ways the sculpture is more real in film than in the actual object.

Visit the de Kooning sculpture at the NGV as well as PTPP at ACCA. What differences are there in how we see the sculpture with the human eye and with the inhuman eye of the film?

Curriculum Links

VELS Thinking Processes and The Arts – Art: Creating and Making/Exploring and Responding

LEVEL 2, 3 and 4

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION TOPICS

Choose some art objects with very literal meanings and ideas. Talk about what would happen if you took the object away - what other ways could you represent this artwork?

Take photos of a 3D art object such as the *Vault* sculpture outside ACCA and create a new art object such as a painting, photomontage, sculpture, or photostory.

Some of the artists in PTPP use other people in their artwork, create an artwork using your friends.

Conceptual artists often write instructions for their work, so it can be recreated in other locations around the world. Write a set of instructions for an installation you would like to make. It can be as big and ambitious as you like!