

Entities, installation view, 2024, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Entities: The Concepts and Post-Object Exhibitions

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Entities*. Inside, you'll find a curatorial overview, background information on the artists, and insights into selected artworks.

The kit includes discussion prompts to encourage critical thinking, along with a flexible activity designed for use in the classroom or gallery setting. Educators can adapt the content to suit primary or secondary students, integrating it into broader visual arts, history, or cultural studies learning.

ACE

About the Exhibition

Entities: The Concept and Post-Objects Exhibition runs from 1 June to 10 August 2024 at ACE. This archival presentation highlights Adelaide's groundbreaking conceptual and post-object art movements of the 1970s and 1980s.

Curated by Alexandra Nitschke with archivist-in-residence Cameron Fleming, the exhibition focuses on two pivotal shows that shaped experimental practice locally: Concepts (Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, 1974) and *the Australian and New Zealand Post Object Show – A Survey* (Experimental Art Foundation, 1976).

Through typewritten documents, black-and-white photographs, posters, essays, videos, and ephemera, visitors can explore the radical ideas of the era, where concept alone defined an artwork. A timeline traces the development of CAS (SA) and EAF, situating lectures, performances, screenings, and installations in historical context.

Despite its geographic distance from major art centres, Adelaide became a hub for artists reshaping institutions from within. The exhibition is also collaborative: community contributions have helped document and digitise ACE's archives, supported by the State Library of South Australia.

Entities invites visitors not just to look back, but to engage with conceptual art as a living, evolving inquiry rooted in archive, memory, and collective energy.



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About the Curator



Alexandra Nitschke

Alexandra Nitschke is an independent curator and researcher based on the unceded Country of the Peramangk people in the Adelaide Hills. She has a particular interest in the convergence of contemporary exhibition practices and the archive. Alexandra has cultivated a deep working knowledge of regional contexts as Curator at the Rockhampton Museum of Art (2017-2018) and as Curatorial Assistant at the Ipswich Art Gallery (2011-2015). Most recently Alexandra was a research candidate at the University of Adelaide, supported by an Australian Government Research Training Scholarship. She has written for the Australasian Registrars Committee Journal and fine print magazine, amongst others.

Selected Artworks



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Something remarkable was unfolding in Adelaide's art scene during the 1970s and early 1980s. Amid global shifts in artistic practice, local artists and theorists were rethinking what art could be. Across the world, artists were challenging traditional institutions and forming their own spaces; Adelaide, despite its geographic distance, became a vital centre of radical innovation.

Conceptualism and post-object art defined this moment. Conceptual artists prioritised ideas over objects, while post-object artists embraced performance, installation, film, and happenings. Both movements sought to transform the structures of art, inviting new relationships between artist, audience, and institution.

Entities: The Concepts and Post-Object Exhibitions revisits two pivotal Adelaide exhibitions, *Concepts* (Contemporary Art Society of South Australia, 1974) and *The Australian and New Zealand Post-Object Show – A Survey* (Experimental Art Foundation, 1976). Together, they mark a turning point in Australian contemporary art, where experimentation, collaboration, and critique reshaped the creative landscape.

Through archival photographs, posters, essays, recordings, and ephemera, the exhibition captures the urgency and ambition of that era. It reflects not only a transformative artistic movement, but also the collective energy that sustained it.

This project builds on the ongoing efforts of artists, curators, and researchers to preserve Adelaide's experimental art history, with vital support from the State Library of South Australia.

Ultimately, Entities is both reflection and renewal, a reminder that conceptual art remains a living force, continually shaping how we think, make, and imagine.

Discussion

- How did conceptual and post-object artists in the 1970s challenge traditional ideas of what an artwork could be?Do you think an artwork still needs to be a physical object, or can an idea, action, or experience be enough?
- Why do you think Adelaide — a smaller, more peripheral city — became such an important site for experimental art in the 1970s?How can local communities influence national or global art movements today?

Gallery Discussion

- *Entities* showcases archival materials, including photographs, letters, and writings, highlighting the history of two significant art galleries in Adelaide: The Contemporary Art Society of South Australia and ACE. What does the term "entity" mean in the context of this exhibition? How do these archival materials contribute to our understanding of the evolution of art galleries in Adelaide?

- The exhibition presents tangible traces of an historic conceptual legacy, focusing on the intangible aspects of art and its evolution. What is conceptual art, and how does it differ from traditional forms of art? In what ways can intangible elements, like ideas and processes, be considered art?

- By exploring the history of these galleries, the exhibition invites reflection on the role of art institutions in shaping cultural narratives. How do art institutions influence the development and perception of art? What role do galleries play in preserving and presenting cultural histories?

Classroom Activity

- Brainstorm words or concepts that come to mind when you think about art institutions and their role in society. These could relate to:
  – Preservation (archives, history)
  – Education (learning, workshops)
  – Community (engagement, outreach)
  – Innovation (new ideas, experimentation)

- Choose one or two ideas and create an artwork that represents your personal perspective on the role of art institutions in society. You might explore how galleries and museums preserve culture, inspire creativity, or connect communities. Use a medium of your choice (e.g., drawing, collage, digital art, or mixed media) and experiment with materials and techniques to express your ideas.

- Bring the class artworks together in a group exhibition. Reflect on how the collection of works reveals diverse perspectives on what art institutions mean to different people. What common themes or differences emerge when viewing the works collectively?

- Walk around and respond to your classmates' artworks. What new perspectives or insights have you gained from seeing how others represented art institutions? How does this activity shape your understanding of the role of art in society today?

Curriculum Links

Australian Curriculum / Visual Art /
Years 11–12 SACE Objectives

- Implement ideas and representations
- Apply literacy skills
- Analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in art
- Evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories
- Experiment in response to stimulus
- Create meaning through the knowledge and understanding of art materials, techniques, technologies, and processes
- Realise responses to communicate meaning

Australian Curriculum / Visual Arts /
Years F-10

- Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)
- Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Respond to art works and consider where and why people make them, including visual art works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how they use materials, techniques, technologies, and processes (AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVA10D02)
- Practice techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art making (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)

Visit Us

Adelaide Contemporary Experiemntal

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Adelaide SA 5000

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Tours

We welcome visits from education groups, primary through to tertiary, and encourage self-guided visits to our exhibitions. For more information about how to book, visit our website or email us.

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Curator: Alexandra Nitschke

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Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE) is supported by the South Australian Government. ACE is also assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its arts funding and advisory body. ACE is a member of Contemporary Arts Organisations Australia.