

Emiko Artemis, 2026, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Andre Castellucci.

Leaves: Eco-Anxiety

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Leaves: Eco-Anxiety*. Inside, you'll find a curatorial overview, background information on the artist, 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.

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About the Exhibition

We live at a time when environmental problems such as climate change, habitat loss, pollution and ecological disasters can feel overwhelming. The term eco-anxiety describes feelings of distress, worry or fear connected to environmental harm. These feelings can also exist alongside eco-grief and eco-rage - sadness, anger and frustration about what is happening to the natural world.

Leaves: Eco-Anxiety brings together seven South Australian artists who consider how we might respond to these feelings. Rather than suggesting there is one solution, the exhibition explores different ways people can exercise agency: caring for Country, planting native species, restoring ecosystems, sharing knowledge, reusing materials, gathering together, making noise, performing rituals and simply taking time to pay attention.

Throughout the exhibition, leaves appear in many different forms - from eucalyptus and tea leaves to medicinal plants and biodegradable materials. Artists also use scent, sound, touch, performance and participation. Together, their works ask us to consider how art might help us understand ecological problems while also creating spaces for care, experimentation and action.

Key Ideas

eco-anxiety · Country · ecology · environmental care · agency · reciprocity · restoration · collective action · experimentation · reuse · ritual · sensory experience · knowledge sharing



Leaves: Eco-Anxiety, exhibition view, 2026, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

About the artists

Leaves: Eco-Anxiety brings together seven South Australian artists: Emiko Artemis, Alycia Bennett and Florian Cinco, Crista Bradshaw, Jingwei Bu, Bryce Cawte, Stephanie Doddridge, and Trudy Tandberg (1971–2026). Working across installation, sculpture, sound, performance and ecological practice, the artists explore different ways of responding to environmental change and eco-anxiety. Their works move between caring for Country, ecological restoration, cultural knowledge, collective action, ritual, experimentation and creative expression, considering how feelings of environmental concern might be transformed into meaningful forms of action.

Selected Artworks

Stephanie Doddridge's works in *Leaves: Eco-Anxiety* explore how the materials used to make art can become part of ecological thinking. Through months of experimentation, Doddridge developed her own translucent bioplastic using biodegradable materials. Unlike conventional petroleum based plastics, the material is designed to eventually break down and return to the earth, becoming available again to soil, microbes and other living systems.

In *Leaves*, Doddridge uses this bioplastic to hold native seeds, leaves, flowers and soil, and as a large circular screen for moving images documenting ecological restoration at Monarto on Ngarrindjeri Country. The handmade surface is uneven and temporary, changing the way the projected images appear while connecting the artwork's material directly to the environmental work shown within it.

Rather than creating artworks intended to last forever, Doddridge asks what might happen if artists considered where their materials come from and where they will go afterwards. Her practice explores reuse, decomposition and what she calls an "ethic of material reciprocity", where materials can change purpose rather than simply becoming waste.



Stephanie Doddridge, *Holding, seeing through*, 2026, bioplastic, native seeds, flowers, leaves, soil, eucalyptus branches, iris leaf string, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Discussion

- How does knowing that Doddridge's bioplastic will eventually break down change the way you think about the artwork?
- Do you think art needs to last forever to be valuable?
- Doddridge experimented with different materials and processes before developing her bioplastic. How can experimentation and failure help artists and scientists discover new ways of working?

Selected Artworks



Jingwei Bu, *Temples of Time*, 2026, Chinese painting silk, canvas, black tea, dried tea leaves, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

In *Temples of Time*, Jingwei Bu uses tea as both an artistic material and a record of time spent with others. Tea has been central to Bu's practice for several years, with the artist holding tea ceremonies and sharing tea with friends, artists and visitors. Rather than discarding what remains afterwards, Bu collects the used tea leaves and tea liquid, preserving traces of these encounters and everyday rituals.

For *Leaves: Eco-Anxiety*, these accumulated materials form two suspended architectural structures. Tea stained Chinese painting silk, small canvases and dried tea leaves carry the marks, scents and residues of repeated tea drinking. Nearby, a tall tower of tea stained paper further records these repeated actions. Tea appears in many forms throughout the installation: as leaf, liquid, stain, scent and trace.

Through saving and reusing materials that might otherwise be thrown away, Bu shows how small actions can accumulate and take on new meaning over time. *Temples of Time* also creates a quiet space within the exhibition, encouraging visitors to slow down and consider ideas of care, memory, connection and our relationship with the materials we use.

Discussion

- Bu transforms leftover tea and stains from everyday experiences into an artwork. What other everyday materials or traces could be saved and used to tell a story about time, memory or connection?
- Temples of Time is made from materials collected through repeated tea ceremonies and shared experiences. How does knowing the history of these materials change the way you experience the artwork?

Gallery Discussion

- Where can you find leaves or plant materials? How has each artist used them differently?
- Which artworks involve smell, sound, touch or movement as well as sight?
- Where can you see examples of reuse, recycling, sharing or ecological restoration?
- Some artists respond to eco-anxiety quietly, while others use action, humour, ritual or noise. Which different responses can you identify?
- Where can you see evidence of time or change in the exhibition?
- Can an artwork actually help the environment, or can its role be to change how people think, feel or behave?

Classroom Activity

- Ask students to identify one environmental issue that concerns them. It could be very local—a tree being removed, litter at school, loss of habitat, water use or lack of native plants—rather than a global environmental problem.
- Instead of trying to "solve" the whole issue, students develop one small action in response. Inspired by the artists in Leaves, this could take the form of an instruction, performance, poster, sculpture made from reused materials, sound work, planting activity, ritual, exchange or collaborative artwork.
- Students should consider: What do I want people to notice? What action am I asking them to take? Could other people participate? What materials do I actually need? Can I reuse something rather than buy something new?
- Bring the works together to create a class exhibition titled From Feeling to Action. Afterwards, discuss which projects act directly on an environmental problem and which work by changing awareness, emotion or relationships. This reflects one of the central ideas of Leaves: ecological responses can be practical, contemplative, collective, ritualistic, noisy or experimental, and action does not need to begin at an enormous scale.

Further Reources

- Stephanie Doddridge: Tools for Quiet Activisim, ACE, related exhibiton at the Museum of Economic Botany, Adelaide Botanic Gardens
- Exhibition Catalogue, ACE

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

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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: Danni Zuvela

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