Studios: 2024, 2022, installation view. Phjotography by Sam Roberts.

Studios: 2024

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Studios: 2024*. 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

The 2024 ACE Studio Program artists confront some of the most urgent social and cultural challenges of our time, from the housing crisis and wealth inequality to technological acceleration and the ongoing impacts of colonisation. The exhibition invites audiences to engage with each artist's distinct vision while drawing connections between their works, amplifying shared aesthetics and resonant themes across the gallery. Bold, imaginative, and deeply sensory, these works command attention and create a compelling, immersive experience for visitors.

Together, the artists demonstrate the remarkable depth and diversity of contemporary practice in South Australia today. Over the course of their residency, they have embraced experimentation, taken risks, and pushed the boundaries of their materials and ideas. It has been a privilege to witness their dedication and evolution throughout the year and to support the realisation of this ambitious, thought-provoking final exhibition.

Carly Tarkari Dodd (2024), *Studios: 2024*, installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

About the artists

Back left to right: Katey Smoker, Carly Tarkari Dodd, Marian Sandberg.
Front left to right: Emmaline Zanelli, Abby Murdoch.

Ngarrindjeri, Kaurna and Narungga artist and curator Carly Tarkari Dodd interweaves traditional and contemporary textile practices in a critique of adornment and power. Using Ngarrindjeri weaving techniques with satin and recycled fabric, she reimagines imperial jewellery, necklaces, brooches and rings, as soft sculptural forms. Through scale and material play, Dodd questions the hierarchies embedded in decorative traditions.

Abbey Murdoch examines the housing crisis, highlighting the paradox of empty homes amid widespread homelessness. Her installations, built from humble materials like net curtains and bricks, evoke empathy and critique the systems that perpetuate inequality.

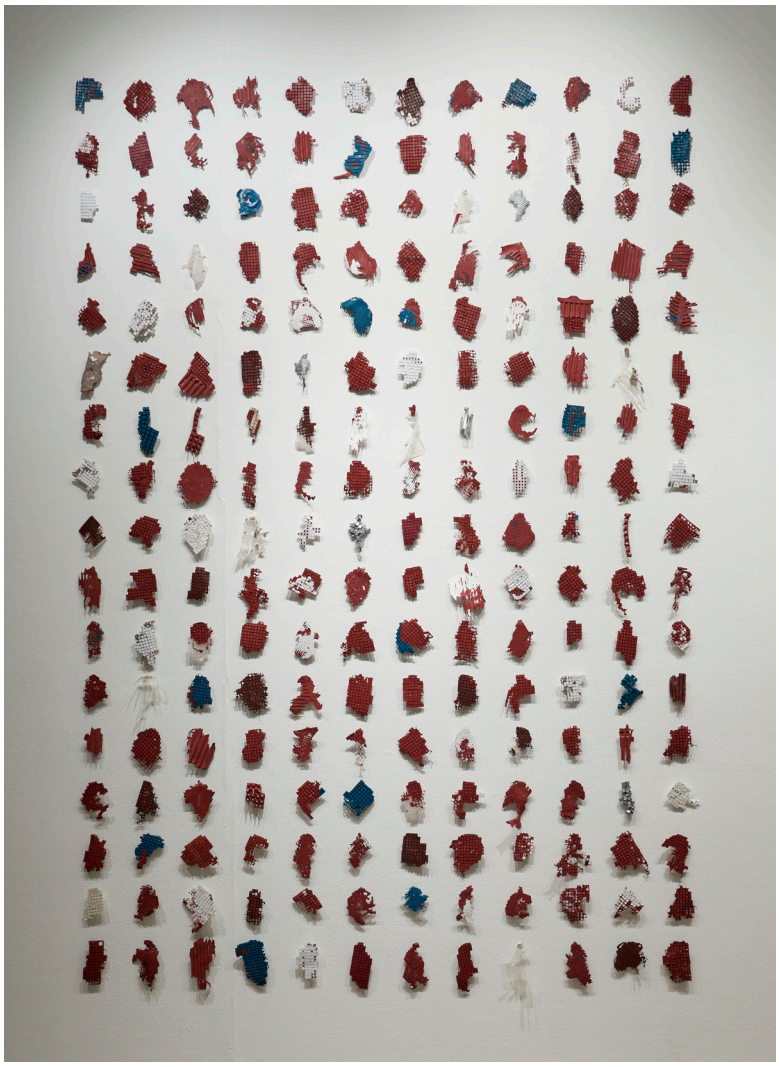
Marian Sandberg explores the intersection of technology and the body. Combining textiles with 3D printing and hydraulic mechanisms, her six-metre kinetic sculpture models her womb, transforming intimate anatomy into a living machine.

Katey Smoker redefines painting by removing the brush, canvas and frame, pouring layers of paint to form three-dimensional compositions. Her practice pushes the boundaries of what painting can be, treating pigment itself as structure.

Known for her video and photographic work, Emmaline Zanelli uses installation to explore ideas of value and captivity. Inspired by time spent in Roxby Downs, her assemblage of interconnected animal cages and lights reflects on adventure, vulnerability and the ethics of care.

Selected Artworks

Through experimentation and material-play, Katey Smoker explores the physicality of paint - creating spatial compositions that move beyond traditional surfaces and expanding its possibilities as both medium and subject. At its core, this work is a skin. The material is paint, but the paintings are revoked of their undersurface, canvas, paper, board, or bark. Smoker's paint sculptures are constructed by layering upon layering of acrylic paint that the artist pours onto gridded structures, allowing each pour to dry, before liberating it from its mold so that what remains is purely paint things. She aims to unframe the paint, challenging conventional ideas of what a painting can be, highlighting its capacity to stand on its own. Whether the resulting artworks are objects, sculpture or paintings is left open but the material of paint itself is what emerges as elusive, responsive, unpredictable, and limitless.



Katey Smoker (2024), *Studios: 2024*, installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Discussion

- How does Katey Smoker's process of pouring and layering paint change the way we think about what paint is and what it can do?
- If there's no canvas or frame, is it still a painting? What makes something a painting, a sculpture, or both?
- Smoker's method involves patience, chance, and repetition. How might the act of layering and releasing the paint influence the final work's meaning or appearance?

Selected Artworks

Marian Sandberg (2024), *Studios: 2024*, installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

In this installation, artist Marian Sandberg explores the complex relationship between technology, the body, and reproductive experience. The work takes inspiration from her own hysterectomy, where her uterus was digitally scanned and transformed into a mechatronic sculpture, a mechanical structure that moves and responds to viewers.

The large, gallery-sized form combines industrial materials like 3D-printed parts, pneumatic cylinders, and recycled chair legs with soft, domestic materials such as fabric, embroidery, and upholstery. This balance between the mechanical and the handmade creates both tension and harmony, a reflection of how technology and human experience continually shape one another.

Activated by movement sensors, the sculpture expands and contracts in rhythmic cycles, mimicking natural biological processes like breathing or menstruation. Each time it activates, it sends an email to the artist, a gesture that connects the mechanical object back to its human origin. This blend of the personal and the technological raises questions about identity, care, and connection in an increasingly digital world.

Sandberg's work invites viewers to think critically about how reproductive technology, medical intervention, and gendered experience intersect. By reimagining her uterus as an autonomous machine, she challenges traditional views of the body as passive, instead presenting it as active, intelligent, and self-determined.

Discussion

- How does Sandberg's use of mechanical and digital materials change the way we think about the human body? Can technology ever feel "alive"?
- Why might an artist choose to use their own body, or experiences of it, as the basis for their artwork? What emotions or ideas does this bring into the piece?

Gallery Discussion

- The exhibition features a range of mediums, including painting, video, installation, assemblage, and sculpture. How do the different materials and techniques influence your experience of the works? Which medium stands out to you the most, and why?
- Each artist has developed their work through ACE's annual Studio Program, a fully supported professional development opportunity for South Australian artists. How might working in a studio environment shape an artist's creative process? And what role do studios play in the development of new artworks?
- Curated by ACE Artistic Director Danni Zuvela, the exhibition reflects a considered curatorial vision. How does the curator's perspective shape the presentation of the works? In what ways do the artworks complement or contrast with one another within the exhibition space?
- The exhibition is designed to be accessible, with features such as Auslan translation, audio recordings, and a sensory map. How do these accessibility features enhance your understanding and engagement with the exhibition? And why is it important for art exhibitions to be accessible to all audiences?

Classroom Activity

- Brainstorm words or images that come to mind when you think about creativity and artistic expression. These could relate to:
  – Materials (paint, clay, fabric)
  – Techniques (sculpting, weaving, digital media)
  – Concepts (identity, culture, environment)
  – Emotions (joy, struggle, discovery)
- Choose one or two ideas and create a work in a medium of your choice (e.g., drawing, collage, sculpture, digital art). Experiment with materials and techniques that best express your ideas. How does your work communicate your personal artistic journey?
- Bring the class artworks together in a group display. Reflect on how the collection of works reveals the diverse creative processes and expressions of your peers. What common themes or differences emerge?
- Walk around and respond to your classmates' works. What new perspectives or ideas have you gained from seeing their creations? How does this activity deepen your understanding of your own creative process and artistic expression?

Further Reources

- 2024 ACE Studio Program Artist: Marian Sandberg, Youtube, video
- 2024 ACE Studio Program Artist: Carly Tarkari Dodd, Youtube, video
- 2024 ACE Studio Program Artist: Emmaline Zanelli, Youtube, video
- 2024 ACE Studio Program Artist: Abby Murdoch, Youtube, video
- 2024 ACE Studio Program Artist: Katey Smoker, Youtube, video
- Step into Studio Artist Carly Tarkari Dodd's Studio, Youtube, video
- Step into Studio Artist Abbey Murdoch's Studio, Youtube, video
- Step into Studio Artist Marian Sandberg's Studio, Youtube, video
- Step into Studio Artist Emmaline's Studio, Youtube, video
- ACE's 2024 studio artists push boundaries in bold end-of-year show, In Daily, article

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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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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