Sam Petersen, *Wee*, 2020, digital photograph. Courtesy of the artist.

Yucky

Exhibition Kit

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

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About the Exhibition

Yucky is a provocative group exhibition that delves into the personal and political complexities of the disabled experience. Curated by Sam Petersen, an artist with disabilities, the exhibition features a diverse array of works by Australian and international artists who are disabled, chronically ill, or neurodivergent. The exhibition challenges societal perceptions and the visceral reactions often elicited by disability, aiming to reclaim the term "yucky" as a form of resistance and empowerment. Through various mediums, the artists confront themes of bodily autonomy, vulnerability, and the politics of care, inviting viewers to reconsider their biases and engage in a dialogue about inclusion and empathy.

Featuring new and recent work by a mix of pivotal Australian and international contemporary artists, the exhibition centres the perspectives and experiences of those who are disabled, chronically ill and neurodivergent.

Makeda Duong, *The Real Thing*, 2023, installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

About the artist

Sam Petersen, Lead Artist.

Lead Artist, Sam Petersen is a queer visual artist, writer, and performer who uses augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) and a power wheelchair. Living and working on the stolen lands of the Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung people of the Kulin nation, Sam's work explores themes of disability, identity, and the politics of care. Through their art, Sam seeks to challenge societal norms and perceptions, creating spaces for dialogue and understanding. Their involvement in *Yucky* reflects a commitment to amplifying the voices and experiences of disabled individuals, fostering a more inclusive and empathetic artistic community.

Selected Artworks

Finnegan Shannon's *Do you want us here or not* (2018–ongoing) is a series of benches and cushions designed to address the lack of accessible seating in art spaces. These pieces feature bold, hand-lettered text such as "Sit if you agree" and "Rest here if you agree," inviting visitors to reflect on their own comfort and the inclusivity of the environment. The installations have been displayed in various institutions, including the V&A Museum in London, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Pinacoteca Agnelli in Turin.

Through this work, Shannon challenges the often-overlooked aspects of accessibility in public spaces, particularly for individuals with disabilities. By providing functional seating, the artist not only offers physical support but also prompts a broader conversation about the inclusivity of cultural institutions. The series serves as both a practical intervention and a subtle protest, questioning the norms of museum design and advocating for spaces that accommodate all bodies.

Finnegan Shannon, *Do you want us here or not*, 2023, installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Discussion

- Why do you think Shannon chose to create benches and cushions rather than traditional "art objects"?
- How does the presence of seating change the way people experience an exhibition?
- Have you ever been in a space that didn't feel welcoming or accessible to you?
- How do Shannon's works invite us to reflect on who feels included or excluded in public spaces like galleries?

Selected Artworks

Sam Petersen, *Drool Fountain*, 2024, installation view, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Sam Petersen's *Drool Fountain* (2024) is a provocative installation that confronts societal discomfort with bodily functions, particularly those associated with disability. The piece features a life-sized photographic print of Petersen suspended from the ceiling. From the image, a thin stream of glycerine drips downward, simulating drool, and collects in a puddle on the floor beneath a yellow warning cone.

The work challenges the viewer's perception of what is considered "clean" or "acceptable," highlighting how society often views disability as "gross." By using glycerine to mimic saliva, *Drool Fountain* emphasises the natural and human aspects of bodily fluids and messes, encouraging audiences to reconsider their biases and engage with the realities of disabled experiences.

Through this piece, Petersen explores themes of vulnerability, visibility, and the politics of care, inviting viewers to reflect on their own responses to the "yucky" and to question the ableist assumptions that underpin such reactions.

Discussion

- How does *Drool Fountain* challenge ideas of what is considered "clean" or "acceptable," and what does this reveal about society's attitudes toward disability?
- In what ways does Petersen's use of glycerine to mimic saliva shift how audiences think about bodily fluids, vulnerability, and humanity?

Gallery Discussion

- Yucky is a group exhibition that explores the personal and political complexities that exist as part of disabled experience. What does the title "Yucky" suggest about the themes and concepts explored in the exhibition? And how do the artworks challenge societal perceptions of disability and difference?
- The exhibition features new and recent work by a mix of pivotal Australian and international contemporary artists, centering the perspectives and experiences of those who are disabled, chronically ill, and neurodivergent. How do these diverse perspectives contribute to a broader understanding of disability? And in what ways do the artists use their work to reclaim agency and voice?
- The exhibition includes a variety of mediums and approaches, from performance to visual art, each addressing themes of bodily autonomy, vulnerability, and societal norms. How do different mediums affect the way the themes are communicated? And what impact does the use of personal and intimate subject matter have on the viewer?

Classroom Activity

- Brainstorm words or phrases that come to mind when you think about the concept of "yuck." These could relate to:
  – Physical sensations (slimy, sticky, cold)
  – Emotional responses (disgust, discomfort, fear)
  – Cultural taboos (bodily functions, illness, disability)
  – Social perceptions (otherness, exclusion, difference)
- Choose one or two words and create a work in a medium of your choice (e.g., drawing, collage, digital art). Experiment with materials and techniques that best express your ideas. How does your work communicate your personal reaction to "yuck"?
- Bring the class artworks together in a group display. Reflect on how the collection of works reveals diverse reactions to "yuck." What common themes or differences emerge?
- Walk around and respond to your peers' works. What new perspectives have you gained from seeing their interpretations? How does this activity expand your understanding of societal perceptions of disability and difference?

Further Reources

- Exhibition Review, Arts Hub, article
- About the Yucky Team, ACE, article
- 'Yucky' on ABC Radio National 'The Art Show', ACE, article and podcast
- About 'Yucky' at Adelaide Contemporary Experimental (ACE) – Auslan Interpreted, Youtube, video
- Yucky Public Program Curators – Guided Tour, Youtube, video

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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This education resource has been produced by ACE Gallery Education to provide information and classroom support material for education visits to the exhibition *Yucky*. The reproduction and communication of this resource is permitted for educational purposes only.

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Sam Petersen has been supported by Creative Australia. The Yucky Public Program Curators are supported by the Government of South Australia through the Richard Llewellyn Deaf and Disability Arts program. This project is presented and supported by Adelaide Festival. The Yucky Reading Room is supported by the City of Adelaide. The Culture Brothers are supported by Tutti Arts.

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.