

Goulburn Regional Art Gallery presents

17 jul.– 28 aug. 2021

# Dean Cross Icarus, my Son



Education Kit



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## About the Education Kit

This Education Kit has been developed for Dean Cross 'Icarus, my Son' 17 jul.—28 aug. 2021 and was prepared by Sally O'Neill, Education Officer. O'Neill has a Bachelor of Fine Arts majoring in Painting and Drawing and Certificate III in Early Childhood, with several years experience in developing and delivering an Education Program for regional and public galleries. O'Neill is also a practising artist whose painting practice explores personal and shared narratives.

The kit includes practical and theory activities designed for upper primary and secondary students, however may be used by audiences of all ages. The kit is suitable for use before and after visiting the Gallery. Use the table below to help you determine the level of learning.

STAGE	AGE/ YEAR
Preschool	3– 5 years old
Early Stage 1	Kindergarten
Stage 1	Year 1 and 2
Stage 2	Years 3 and 4
<b>Stage 3</b>	<b>Years 5 and 6</b>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<b>Years 7 and 8</b>
<b>Stage 5</b>	<b>Years 9 and 10</b>
<b>Stage 6</b>	<b>Years 11 and 12</b>

Image front: Dean Cross, *Cataclysm* (detail), 2021, pure pigment on stretched canvas, 200 x 180cm.

Quotation credits: Andrea Tchacos, [Artist Dean Cross on the meaning of Country and complicated histories](#), RUUSH, Fri, 12 Jun 2020

Dean Cross, *Good Initiative Application*, August 2020

## Themes and Influences

The exhibition highlights the following themes:

- Core concepts of risk taking, naivety and misguided confidence in reference to the Greek tragedy of Icarus and Daedalus.
- Use of contemporary art making devices including transdisciplinary practice where artists blend media and practices in non-traditional ways.
- The semi-autobiographical story of young artists relocating from regional areas to big cities in search for greater opportunities.
- Practice of contemporary Aboriginal artists

## Objectives

As a part of viewing the exhibition and completing the activities in this Education kit, students will:

- Gain an understanding about how artists express ideas and communicate with their audience.
- Develop the ability to discuss what is seen, interpret concepts in art and make conclusions about the artist's intentions.
- Identify that artists use a variety of media and forms to convey a variety of messages.
- Discuss and respond to art in a variety of ways.
- Gain a greater knowledge of how art can be a powerful form of documentation and critique of the social, economic, historical, environmental and political context in which it is made.
- Consider the relationship that exists between the artwork, artist, gallery and audience.

## About the artist

### Fill the gaps

Sculpture

Recipient

Choreographing

Arts

Sydney

Ngunnawal

Degree

School

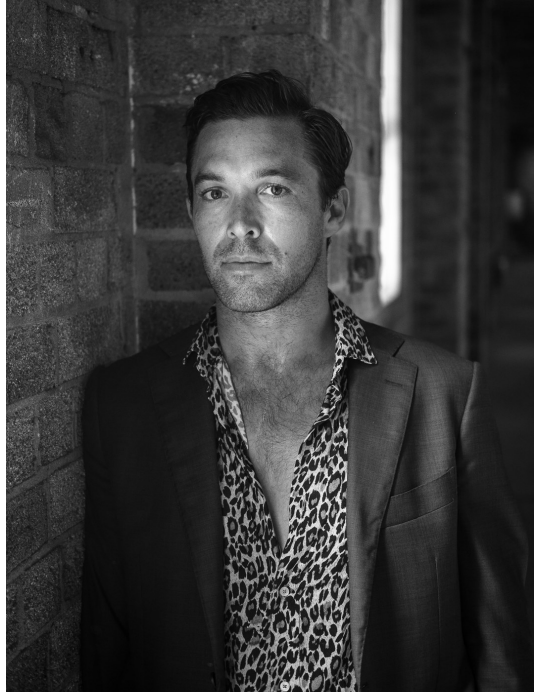
Solo

Artist

Initiative

Dance

Worimi



Dean Cross, photography by Dario Hardaker.

Complete the text below about Dean Cross by selecting the most appropriate work or phrase from the options above.

Dean Cross was born and raised on \_\_\_\_\_ /Ngambri Country and is of \_\_\_\_\_ descent. He is a trans-disciplinary \_\_\_\_\_ primarily working across installation, \_\_\_\_\_ and photography. His career began in contemporary \_\_\_\_\_, performing and \_\_\_\_\_ nationally and internationally for over a decade with Australia’s leading dance companies. Following that Dean re-trained as a visual artist, gaining his Bachelor’s \_\_\_\_\_ from Sydney College of the \_\_\_\_\_, and his First Class Honours from the ANU \_\_\_\_\_ of Art and Design.

Dean is the Gallery’s inaugural \_\_\_\_\_ of ‘The Good \_\_\_\_\_’. ‘Icarus, my Son’ is the artist’s first major \_\_\_\_\_ in this region where he spent his younger years and will be iterated at Carriageworks, \_\_\_\_\_.

# About the exhibition

## Find-a-word

Learn a little more about the exhibition by finding the core concepts listed below in the exhibition.

Contemporary

Icarus

Home

Installation

Greek

Ambition

Worimi

Tragedy

Loss

Transdisciplinary

Regional

Commission

Political

Autobiographical

Award

M	R	R	S	U	R	A	C	I	W	C	O	M	M	I	G	R	A	P
I	P	P	T	R	A	N	S	D	E	O	I	M	I	R	O	W	O	L
R	O	O	O	I	N	S	T	E	L	S	A	T	I	O	E	M	H	Y
I	L	P	R	L	Z	C	O	M	U	S	S	I	O	R	T	R	A	R
E	C	M	E	G	I	R	E	R	E	G	I	O	N	A	L	X	Y	A
M	O	E	G	B	M	T	A	M	B	I	T	R	A	N	I	O	N	N
P	N	T	I	A	T	Y	I	E	D	G	Y	I	C	R	S	E	A	I
O	T	L	A	C	I	H	P	A	R	G	O	I	B	O	T	U	A	L
A	E	N	O	C	E	A	B	T	U	O	M	B	R	C	R	E	Y	P
U	M	N	O	I	T	A	L	L	A	T	S	N	I	O	Y	U	I	I
T	P	O	L	A	B	U	T	I	O	M	L	R	T	M	T	U	I	C
N	O	B	C	O	R	E	S	T	U	A	R	T	R	M	R	A	V	S
O	R	I	L	U	S	K	J	C	C	Y	T	P	A	I	A	J	N	I
I	A	K	A	Y	U	S	E	I	P	I	E	W	O	S	G	N	I	D
T	R	E	C	T	I	A	T	T	T	Y	A	E	I	S	E	F	Y	S
I	Y	E	I	V	J	I	A	E	I	R	U	M	U	I	D	E	T	N
B	O	R	H	S	L	R	T	Y	D	E	F	O	J	O	Y	F	R	A
M	G	G	P	O	W	Q	G	U	I	P	L	H	W	N	R	W	A	R
A	R	A	P	W	P	O	S	I	T	I	O	N	D	R	Y	I	O	T

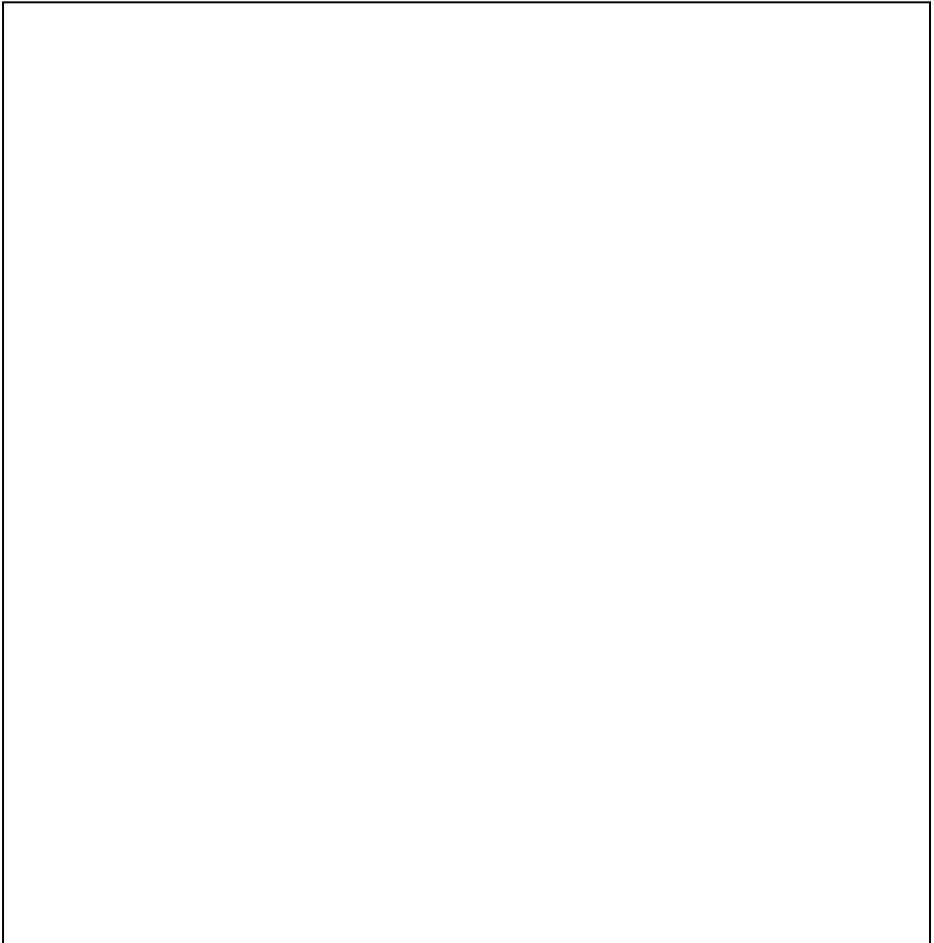
## **Icarus, my Son**

Icarus was the son of Daedalus. They were imprisoned in Daedalus' invention, the labyrinth which was inhabited by a ferocious minotaur.

Daedalus built wings for himself and Icarus. They found their way out of the labyrinth and flew out of the highest tower.

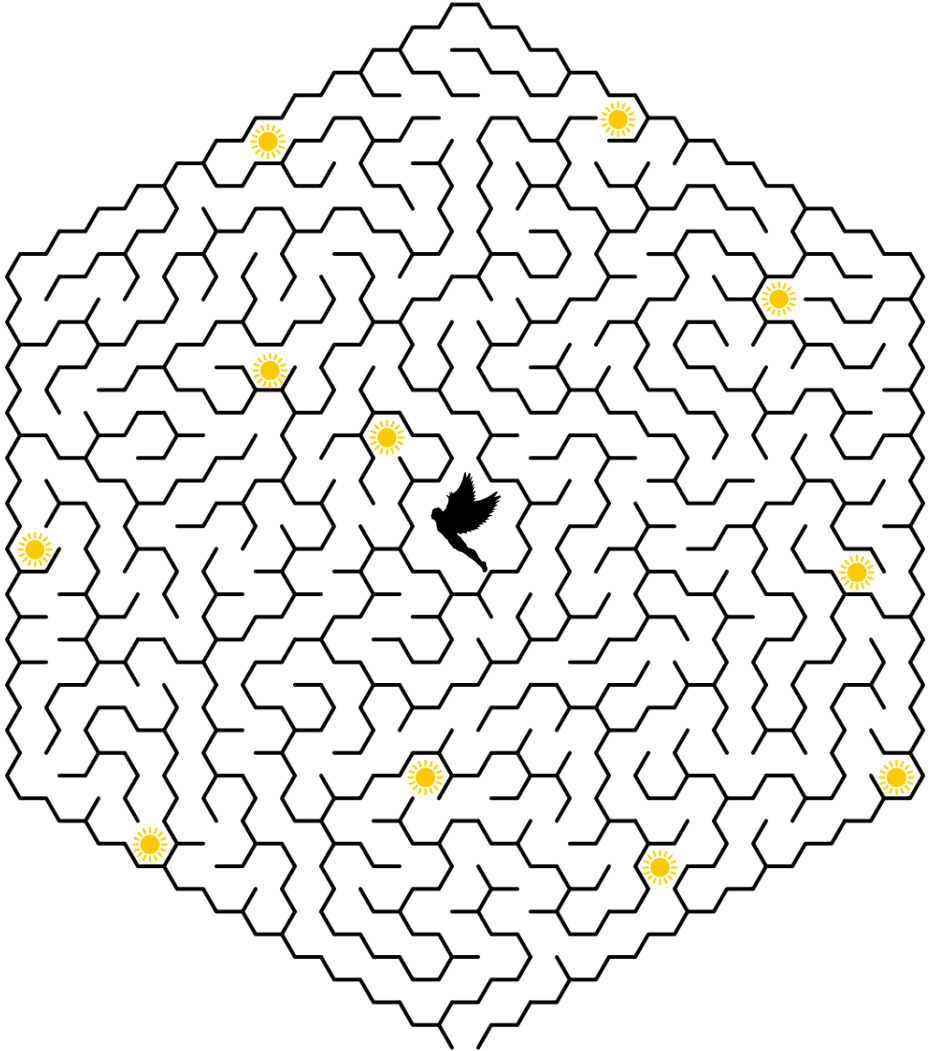
Icarus ignored his father's advice to fly on the same route as him. Icarus flew up higher toward the sun, the wax in the wings melted and he fell into the sea and drowned.

Illustrate the myth in the space provided below.



## Escape

Help Icarus escape the labyrinth and fly to freedom. Be careful not to 'fly to high' and avoid the heat of the sun. Is it possible to escape without meeting a fiery end?





## Unpack the metaphor

Dean sees a lot of parallels in the fall of Icarus and the contemporary story of young aspiring artists leaving the regions in their ambitious quest for opportunity and success.

Consider the two lists of concepts from each of the two stories. Use a line to connect similar ideas from the original myth to today's story.

Icarus

Art practice

Minotaur

Young Artists

The labyrinth

History

Escape from the maze

'Regional' location

Hubris

The City

Wings

Ambition



Dean Cross, *Icarus, my Son*, 2021, installation view at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery.

**Is it true? Do artists have to move to a big city for opportunity?**

As an artist, it certainly helps to visit galleries, mix with like minded people at openings and events and show your work where it will be seen by the most people. However, there are lots of other ways for artists to build networks and a reputation without having to relocate to the city. Consider each of the categories below and make some notes next to each on how advances in technology have provided new opportunities for artists to stay connected with each other, their audiences and the art world.

Transport \_\_\_\_\_

Zoom \_\_\_\_\_

Online galleries and prizes \_\_\_\_\_

Social Media \_\_\_\_\_

Smart phones \_\_\_\_\_

Website/blogs \_\_\_\_\_

Media \_\_\_\_\_



Dean Cross, *Icarus, my Son*, 2021, installation view at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery.

### **What is left behind?**

As a young person, many people may encourage you to ‘grow your wings’ and leave the ‘nest’. We are told that success and happiness lie elsewhere. But to get there we must leave a lot behind!

What does ‘home’ look like to you? What aspects of home would you feel difficult to part with?

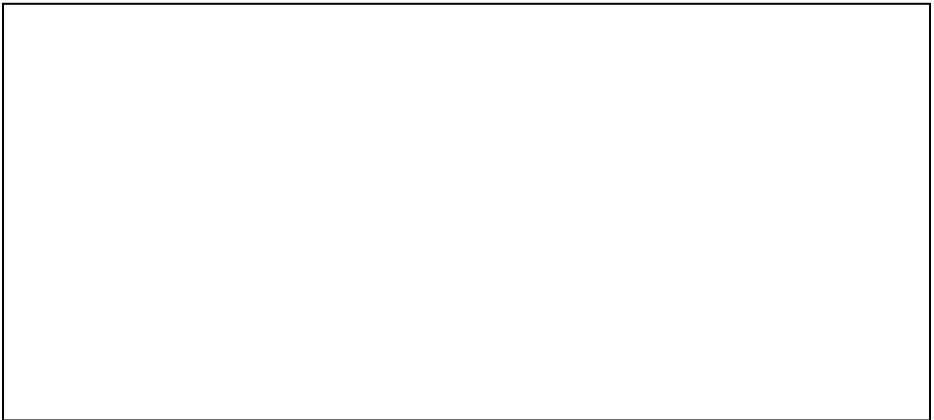
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### **What lies ahead?**

What does your ‘centre’ look like and how will you recognise success when you reach it? Draw a picture of you celebrating success in your ‘centre’ in the box provided.



### **Here’s a thought to ponder from our artist**

“I am Icarus, or Daedalus, or some kind of Minotauresque hybrid. Through this exhibition I must confront my own ambition - my own Icarus thinking – and evaluate my role as a 21st Century culture maker. I trace my fingers along the walls of my labyrinth, doubling back on myself to see where I have come from so I may know where I am going. My hope lies in avoiding the need for wax and feathers and, when I meet the Minotaur, we share a smile and he slips me a map so I may find my way home.”

## Why Susan Boyle?

Nobody today encapsulates the learnings of the fall of Icarus so perfectly and so publicly as Susan Boyle. The Scottish singer shot to fame after the clip of her performing [‘I Dreamed a Dream’](#) from Les Miserables on Britain’s Got Talent went viral. Susan’s fall came in the package of a public meltdown not long after she was announced as runner up in 2009. Explore the story of Susan Boyle by unscrambling some of the key words below.

RAGESRESP	-----	EURSPRIS	-----
TOLGISPHT	-----	DNECSO	-----
INGECRODR	-----	TICOTHSS	-----
EFAM	----	GNSO	----
AMEID	----	LVRAI	-----
GTSRUGLE	-----	LTATEN	-----



Dean Cross, *Updraft* (Paul Robeson/Susan Boyle), film still, 2021, HD video with sound, 42mins.

## **But there's more to it**

As an autobiographical story, we need to consider who Dean is before we have all the pieces to this conceptual journey.

### **First Nations art and artists**

Dean is of Worimi descent, heritage passed from his father's side. However, he has expressed a feeling of disconnection having lived so far from the Country of his ancestors. What is your heritage? Do you identify with all aspects of your ancestry?

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His work is deeply political referencing historical and contemporary impacts on First Nations people including connection and/or disconnection from Country, colonisation and racism. Or does it...? Consider the title of the work 'The Onset of Whiteness'. What are your initial thoughts on the work and its broader context?

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The work is a print of a Namatjira painting with UV bleaching- the sun has caused the work to deteriorate. Does this change your perception?

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So what is Dean's work really about? Should we always read his work as the product of an 'Aboriginal artist'? And what preconceptions do we bring with us when we use that lens to engage with art...?

Is it possible to have multiple contrary readings on a work of art and still be 'right'? What do you think of an artwork asking questions rather than holding all the answers?

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### **Here's a thought to ponder from our artist**

"Artworks can be contrary or hold multiple truths. An artworks power doesn't lie in its answers but purely in the act of asking the question."

## Who was Albert Namatjira?

Learn more about the legend who was Albert Namatjira and why he matters to Dean by completing the crossword.

### Across

1. Dean's family owned suit of first generation Hermmansburg  
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5. Namatjira was born in  
----- NT

6. Namatjira painted in a ----- style

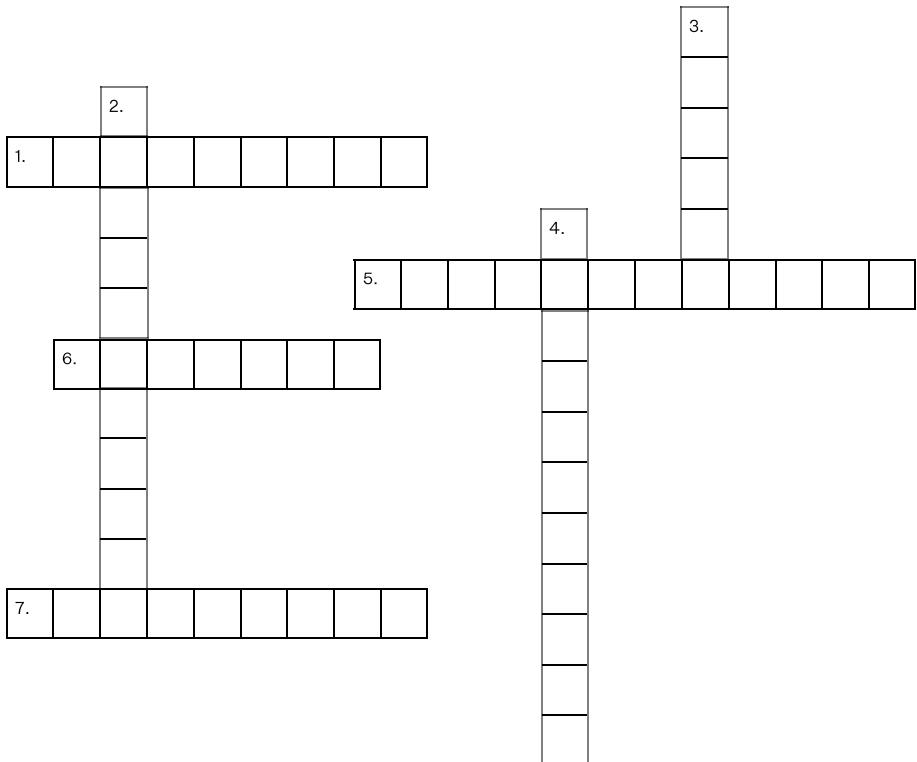
7. Shortly after his death, the family sold the artist's -----

### Down

2. Namatjira and his wife were the first Aboriginal people to be granted -----

3. Namatjira is one of the most ----- Aboriginal painters

4. The artist primarily used -----



## Post-colonialism

Have you ever heard someone say ‘it happened so long ago, why cant they just get over it?’

Intergenerational trauma is passed from the first generation who experienced the trauma through consecutive generations. Research shows that people who experience trauma are more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviours, develop life-style diseases and enter and remain in the criminal justice system.

To compound these issues, there are still many biases today that prevent Aboriginal people from achieving a higher quality of life.

Find out about the Country you live on and who the traditional owners are. Conduct some research on the history of the area and the experiences of the people. How can you acknowledge the past and lingering trauma that may be felt by people in your community?

### Here’s a thought to ponder from our artist

‘In the post-colonial society that we live in, its an endless loop of, what would it be like if it was different?’



Dean Cross, *The Onset of Whiteness*, 1953 – 2021, framed pigment print on paper, sunlight, time, standard flourscent light fitting, T8 flourescent bulb, glass, liquid nails.

## Contemporary Aboriginal Art

Let's break some stereotypes shall we?! What does Aboriginal art look like, what is it about, what materials do artists use? Make a list of your thoughts below:

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-----  
-----  
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From the 2016 census the majority (81%) of Aboriginal people lived in cities and non-remote areas. Contrary to what is commonly believed, only a quarter lived in remote (7%) and very remote (12%) areas.

Check out the artists below online and make some notes about their practice.

Vincent Namatjira \_\_\_\_\_

Nicole Foresheew \_\_\_\_\_

Tony Albert \_\_\_\_\_

Hayley Millar-Baker \_\_\_\_\_

Brenda L Croft \_\_\_\_\_

Tjunkara Ken \_\_\_\_\_

Now take a look at the adjectives below. Circle those that could be applicable in describing contemporary Aboriginal art.

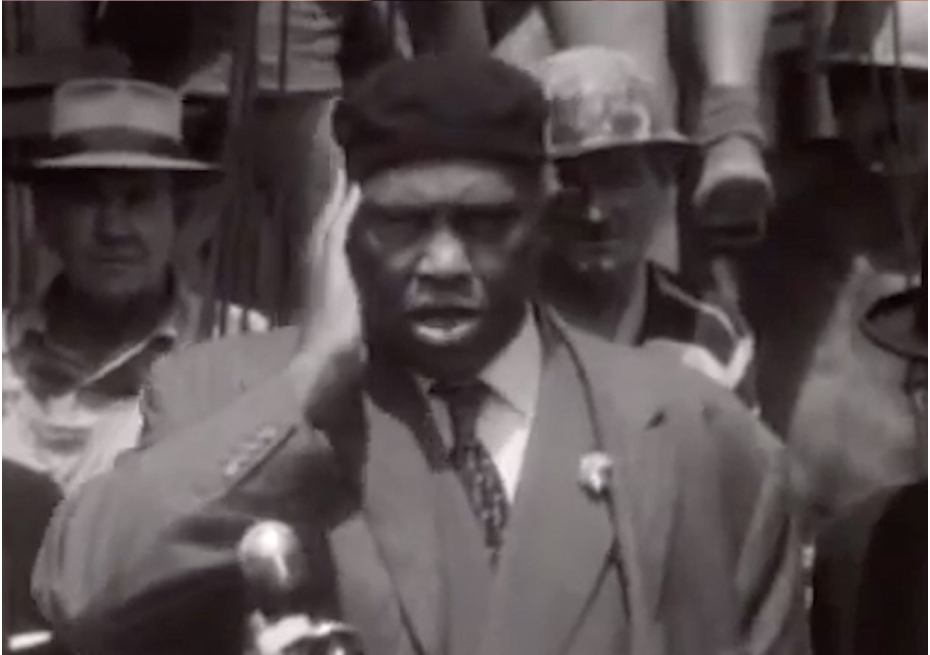
Colourful	Weaving	Informative	Ceramics
Hopeful	Modern	Sculpture	Traditional
Collaborative	Intellectual	Peaceful	Challenging
Figurative	Semi-Abstract	Dots/patterns	Experimental
Political	Emotive	Conservative	Installation
Angry	Personal	Contentious	Accessible
Video	Painting	Abstract	Expressive

We hope you have a big list. Contemporary Aboriginal art can come in a lot of different packages and be multiple things at once!





Dean Cross, *Cataclysm*, 2021, pure pigment on stretched canvas, 200 x 180cm.

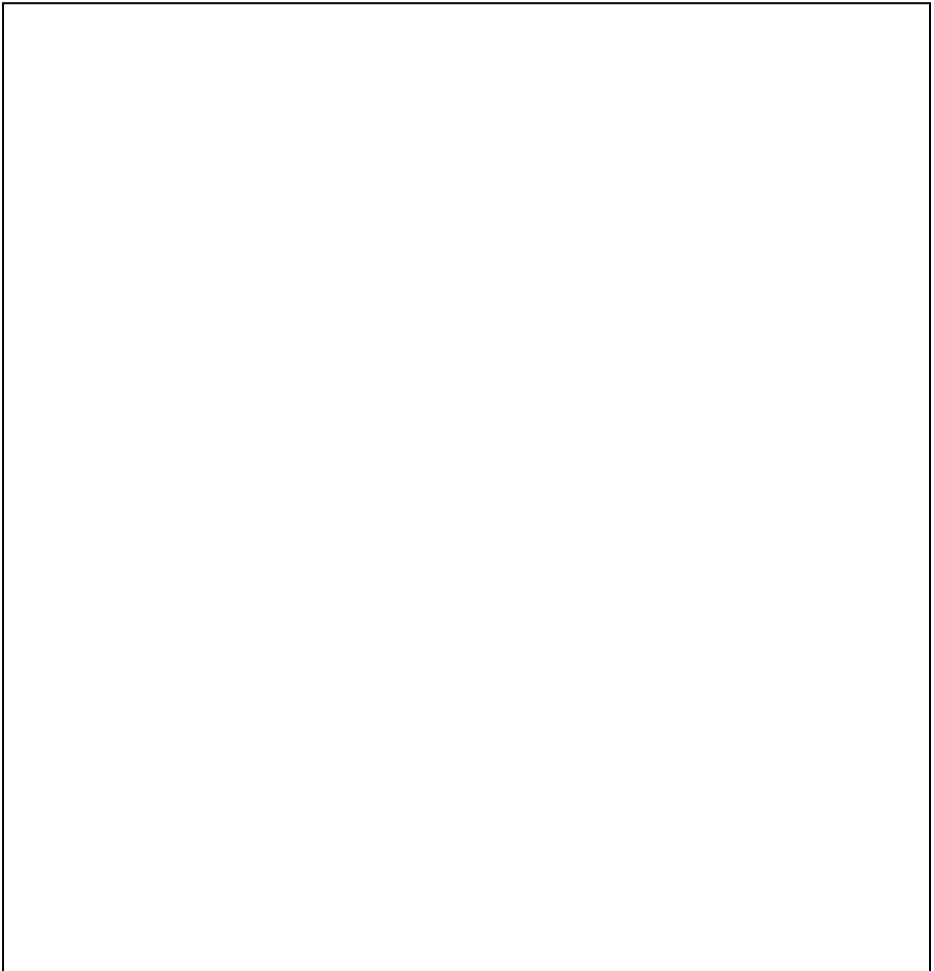


Dean Cross, *Updraft* (Paul Robeson/Susan Boyle), film still, 2021, HD video with sound, 42mins.

## Paul Robeson

Paul Robeson was a baritone concert artist, stage and film actor and Black activist. Dean's film includes a clip of Paul Robeson singing '[O! Man River](#)' to construction worker's in 1960, becoming the first artist to perform on the steps of the Opera House.

Choose a protest movement that interests you. It can be social, political or environmental in nature. Imagine you are going to a rally for your movement. Design a banner or sign to carry with you on the day in the space provided below.



## **Conceptual art**

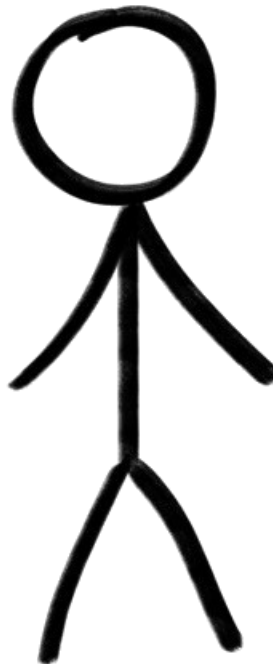
In conceptual art the ideas or concepts are considered more important than what it looks like. An artist may choose the most appropriate medium to help convey their ideas. Therefore conceptual art comes in many different packages.

## **Transdisciplinary practice**

An artist that uses more than one expressive form is called 'multidisciplinary'. An artist who's work crosses many forms at once is called 'transdisciplinary'.

The idea that art can be many different things at once can be a challenging concept, but its really no different to how we define our self identity.

Below is a picture of you! Annotate your picture with ideas on your self identity. Think of particular labels you may identify with, special interests, your appearance, dreams, inspirations...



## Time to create

Dean's practice centres on collage, as a concept and process.

1. Take a whole lot of visual imagery from magazines, the internet or your own photo reel and cut and paste to create your own collage.
2. Then evaluate your work and experience. Do you feel compelled to do more, to experiment further with the medium, process, subject or theme?
3. If you feel like it, create a second work expanding on those areas that interest you.

This compulsive, spontaneous and fluid approach to art making is how Dean prefers to create work! Where do you think the locus of power lies in collage? .....

Dean refers to his work as the 'invisible third space'. What do you think of this idea? .....

## Cricket

Growing up, Dean dreamt of being Australia's next top batsman, hence the cricket bat. Why don't you head outside for a hit with a mate in your backyard or try the 'dice cricket' version below.

- Grab a six-sided die, writing materials and a mate
- Each 'player' writes the numbers 1-11 onto a score sheet
- One player 'bowls' and the other 'bats'. The 'batter' rolls the die and scores the number of runs displayed on the die, unless they roll a five which is considered a 'wicket'. The 'bowler' then rolls the die the 'bowler's' outcome is determined by the table below:

1	2	3	4	5	6
Out, wicket	Out, bowled	Out, caught	Out, LBW	Not out	Out, run out

- When a batter is out, tally their score. Continue until all 10 batters are dismissed
- The batting and bowling roles are reversed
- The 'winner' is the player whose team scores the most runs.

Was this game and its playing in fact, art also...?



Dean Cross, *Right Wing*, 2021, willow, foam, cotton, steel, standard fluorescent light fitting, T8 fluorescent bulb, glass, liquid nails.

## **So why is Dean making this stuff?**

The traditional Gallery space is authoritative; you are expected to follow a set of rules and follow a pre-planned route through the space. You are even told what to think and when to think it. All of the answers are ready for you to come and consume them.

Dean flips this experience on its head. We are instead, provided with a series of decisions, a flurry of thoughts and influences and we definitely wont get answers!

### **Dance**

Before becoming the artist he is today, Dean Cross was a contemporary dancer. This practice still influences the way his exhibitions are curated– you could think of them as one big abstract dance and we, the audience, are his performers!

Turn to YouTube and try one of these dances or try a TikTok trend:

['Single Ladies \(put a ring on it\)' Beyonce](#)

['Nut Bush city limits' Tina Turner](#)

Now throw the rules out the window. Put on your favourite tunes and MOVE IT!

### **Behavioural psychology**

Dean is super interested to see how the choices people make in his space manifest. Will people perform the same 'dance' or will their experiences vastly differ?

Consider the set of 'would you rather' options below with a friend. How do your answers differ? Try throwing in a few questions of your own.

#### **Would you rather...?**

Go into the past and meet your ancestors or go into the future and meet your great-great grandchildren?

Move to a new city or town every week or never be able to leave the city or town you were born in?

Always say everything on your mind or never speak again?

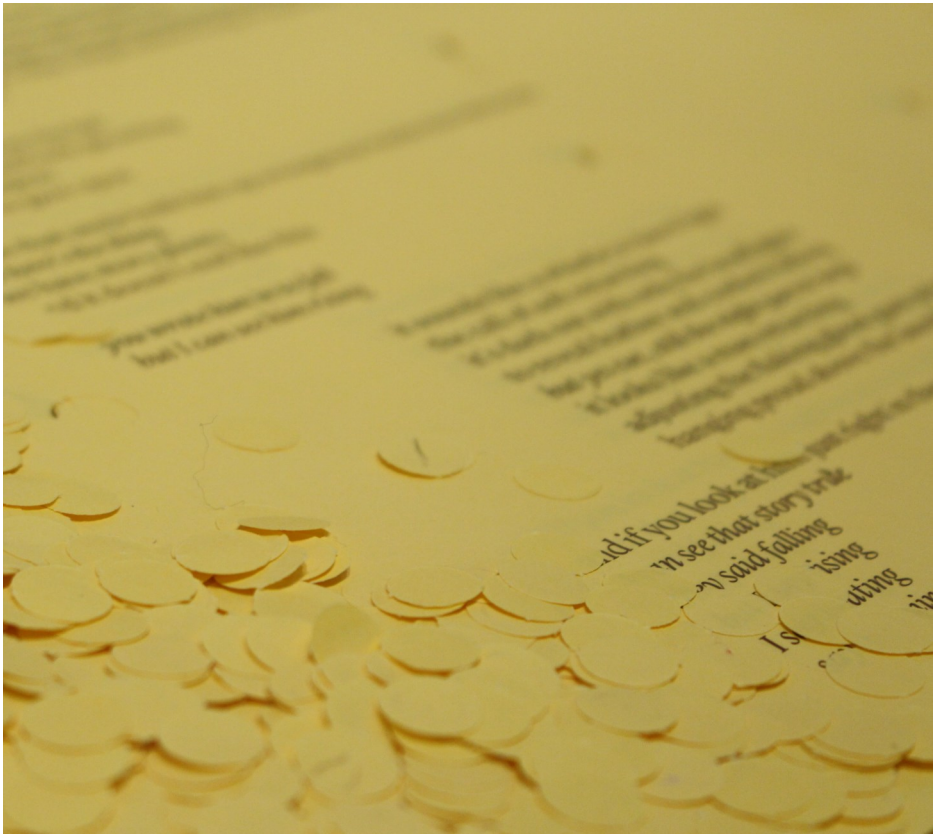
Have more time or more money?

Be able to talk with the animals or speak all foreign languages?

Be Batman or Spiderman?

**Here's a thought to ponder from our artist**

“I think, the worst sort of art is that where you look at it, it tells you everything about it ... To me that's boring, that's dead art. I think art, it's like people ... The best people reveal themselves over time. They're complicated ... And I think artwork should be the same.”



Jazz Money, *still the night parrot sings*, 2021, installation view at Goulburn Regional Art Gallery.



## Understanding it all

Actually, that's the whole point! Dean doesn't give us answers. Instead he takes us on a journey of thought and process. He gives us different perspectives and challenges us to face our presumptions. We each will bring our own set of experiences, attitudes and expectations with us when we view art so we will all have different engagement with the work. Some will be confused, some angry, others convinced they 'get it' and others thankful for the journey and ok with not knowing all the answers. Where do you sit?

### That poem

Dean's good friend is First Nation's poet, Jazz Money. She chose to respond to his show. Take a read of her interpretive poem below:

*still the night parrot sings*

watch the boy fall sky to dust and through  
he doesn't land on that promised confetti  
but instead feels the crunch  
something that slips through dreams  
and cannot be held in morning light  
landing hard on a cold hard thing

it sounds like a truck tearing along the highway  
seen by the country it crosses unseeing

it looks like a cricket bat turned tired  
yelling out in boxing day backyards of almost and could have  
years gone almost and he could have been a —

*cuz, is it true*

that you can move away and slip into a new skin  
polish up the nasal of your accent  
and find ways to never tell the full story  
of the thing you will learn the name for in the city

*what is that they say*

it's only once there is a distance between yourself and this

you might see that it was here all along

maybe it lives in that back shed  
maybe it lives under those creaking floors  
and if you wait long enough in that city  
you might even begin to recall housing insecurity and a black eye  
as some sort of ridgy-didge bullshit badge of genuine  
ascendence

*I heard em whisper*  
did you see him before the fall  
two fists raised and back gleaming  
a proper champion  
for us eyes to gaze upon

maybe that uncle built him up wrongways inside this labyrinth  
*but here's the thing*  
we have story plenty  
and it doesn't end like this

*you wrote him in to fall*  
*but I can see him rising*

it sounds like a whistle in dawn light  
the call of soft returning  
it's dark out with only the headlights  
to reveal feather and confetti falling  
*but yes cuz, still the night parrot sings*  
it looks like a man returning  
adjusting the flaking ghost gum print  
hanging proud above the laundry sink

and if you look at him just right in the city light glow of elsewhere  
*I can see that story true*  
*they said falling*  
*but I say rising*  
*I say floating*  
*say returning*

## **It's your turn to respond**

Take some time to reflect on your journey with Dean's work. Use the space below to respond through writing or drawing; whatever moves you.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the reader to write or draw their response to the text above.

## **Here's a thought to ponder from our artist**

"This exhibition is made for anyone who has ever found themselves dreaming about what could be; dreaming about a full life lived; or simply asking themselves why they get out of bed every day. It is an exhibition about looking at the emerald green grass of the big smoke while feeling a dry crunch underfoot. It is an articulation of aspiration. It is an exhibition for every Susan Boyle, every Wile E. Coyote, every Namatjira and every Donald Bradman. Icarus, my Son is a love letter to my younger self, composed in verse, and whispered gently through the steam of a hot cup of tea."



Goulburn Regional Art Gallery is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW



**CARRIAGEWORKS**