NGV Water Trail

ngv National Gallery of Victoria

LEVEL 2
NGV INTERNATIONAL

Discover the importance of water throughout history and across cultures - as told through a whole world of art

WATER TRAIL

Victoria The Place To Be

Introduction

The National Gallery of Victoria is delighted to join with BlueScope Steel and Melbourne Water to bring you this innovative NGV Water Trail.

As you wander through the galleries at NGV International, look out for the 'water drop' symbol next to key works of art. When you see that symbol, refer to this brochure to learn more about the work of art and how it relates to the story of water — its value and importance throughout history and across cultures.

All life depends on water. In Australia, we live on the driest inhabited continent, so it is vital that we all work together to protect this precious resource and ensure a sustainable water future.

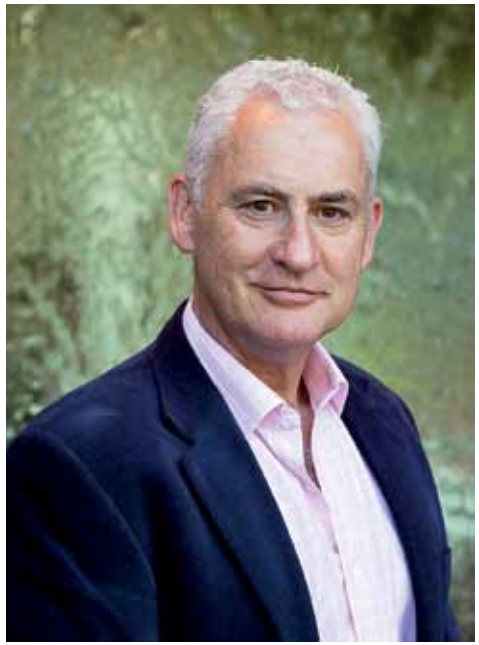
The NGV is committed to achieving and promoting water conservation. With the support of BlueScope Steel and Melbourne Water, this Water Trail has been developed to promote the value of water to NGV visitors.

The NGV has also developed a Water Management Plan for its iconic St Kilda Road Gallery. When it rains, water collects on the roof of NGV International and runs into the building's gutters. The rainwater is fed into underground water tanks and when required, pumped through a treatment plant into the moat system. The entire system, including five moats and four fountains, is designed to use a continually circulating supply of harvested rainwater.

The Waterwall at the entrance to NGV International marks the beginning of the Water Trail. The Waterwall runs separately to the moat system, with its own water holding tank and treatment plant. Rainwater is pumped from underground tanks into the Waterwall holding tank and then through a treatment plant to the Waterwall head. The water cascades down the glass, before flowing back into the holding tank to repeat the cycle. The constant flow creates a natural filter between the bustle of the city and the calm seclusion and ambience of the Gallery.

Discover the importance of water through art — its meaning and its beauty — and find out how we can all play a role in protecting and conserving our precious water resources.

NGV Water Trail Ambassador



Water is a simple, unique and ubiquitous liquid that has provided the basis for the development of human civilisations for centuries. It is aesthetically attractive; an essential ingredient for life; integral to the development of agriculture and trade; and has been celebrated in cultures around the world as part of religions, rituals and art. Our cities have evolved complex systems for the collection, distribution and treatment of water since Minoan times.

Despite the complexity of modern society, it is still the case today that in a large global city like Melbourne, it is necessary for us to undergo significant re-education around the concept that water is critically limited on the Australian continent.

In the face of a changing climate coupled with an increasing population, continued access to a plentiful water supply requires new management regimes and technological advancement.

We are now redesigning water collection opportunities, water storage and treatment systems, pipes and aqueducts as well as limiting water use to ensure equality of access to this precious resource in the same way that civilisations have done for thousands of years.

Unfortunately water security for human use and for agriculture is not universal. In particular in poor nations in Africa and Asia this will be critical if the people in these countries are to be able to adapt to climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change predicts that food production in Africa will halve as a result of the pressure on water, while the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Report states that an additional 1.8 billion people will face water stress by 2080, with large areas of South Asia and northern China facing a grave ecological crisis as a result of glacial retreat and changed rainfall patterns.

Paralleling the problems of provision of water for human use, we now understand the need to protect our rivers and lakes from overuse so that they can continue to provide the ecosystem services that are essential, not only to the species that inhabit them, but to the support of human lifestyles too.

The National Gallery of Victoria's Water Trail enables us to celebrate water while providing a focus for our enjoyment of the Gallery using water as a linking theme. The Trail provides insights over a time continuum that begins at 540BC and reveals that water has been an integral part of human development since then.

Rob Gell
NGV Water Trail Ambassador

Phographer: Fred Kroh

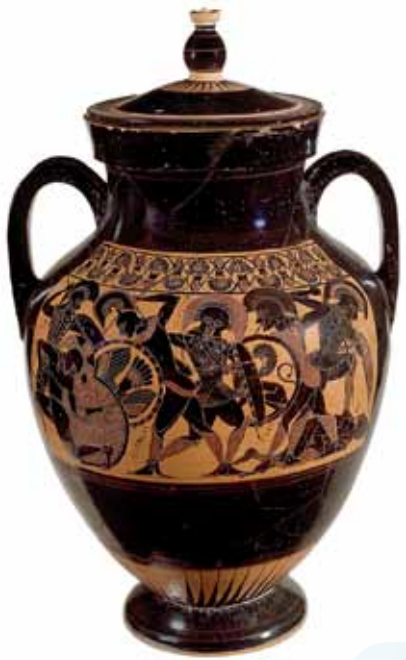
Program Partners

Program Partners

BlueScope Steel is the leading steel company in Australia and New Zealand. The company's products play a big part in people's everyday lives, being vital components in suburban houses, landmark buildings and structures and popular makes of cars. BlueScope Water provides rainwater tanks and rainwater harvesting systems, and agricultural irrigation pipelines.

We have a commitment to respect our communities. In many areas where we operate, water shortages and water quality are significant issues. We continue to do whatever we can to reduce fresh water consumption and increase the use of recycled water at our operations around the world.

Melbourne Water is a water resource manager owned by the Victorian Government. Melbourne Water manages water supply catchments, removes and treats most of Melbourne's sewage, and manages rivers and creeks and major drainage systems across the Port Phillip and Westernport region. Melbourne Water's vision is working together to ensure a sustainable water future.



NGV KIDS

Clang, crash, swish! These soldiers are making a lot of noise. How can you tell these men are soldiers?

***Psykter amphora (Chalkidian black-figure ware)* 540 BC**

This amphora, with its drain hole in the base and holes under the handles, was probably a wine cooler and would have had an internal container around which icy water was packed. It is rare that the lid has been preserved. The panels on each side show scenes of intense fighting from the Trojan War. Nearly all of the warriors are named by inscriptions written in the Chalkidian alphabet.

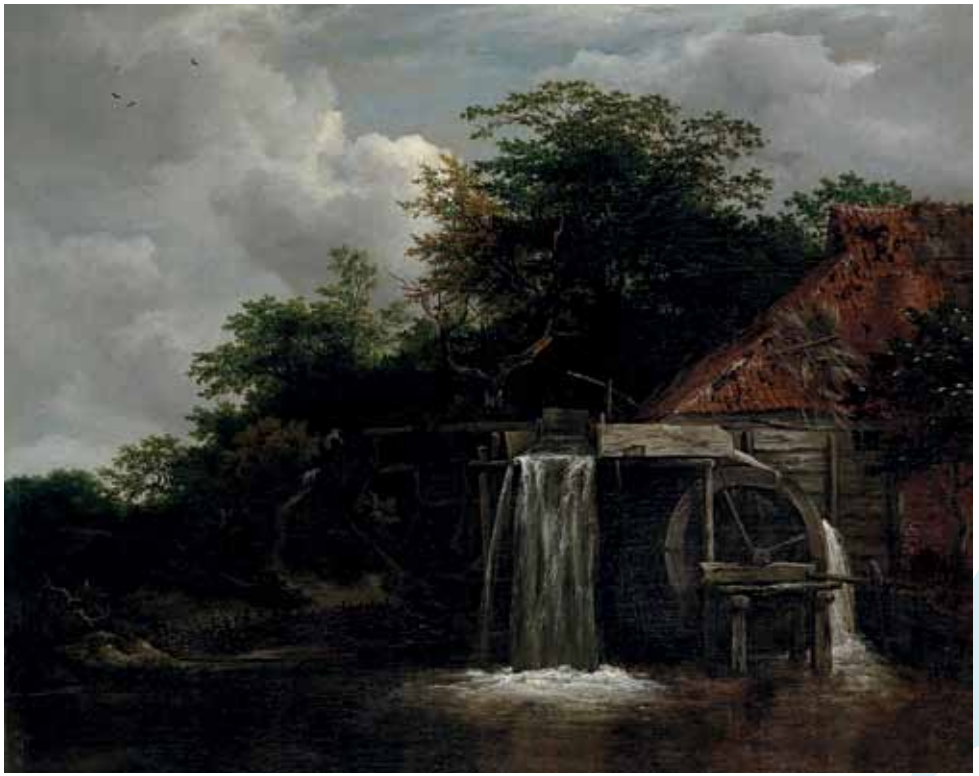
Did you know?

A modern tap may be less elegant than a Greek amphora, but think how difficult life would be if you had to fetch and carry all the water you use.

Clean water at the turn of a tap is a luxury granted to few people in the world's long history. Even today, more than one billion people still have to carry their household water for long distances.

By contrast, most of Melbourne's drinking water comes from mountain ash forests high up in the Yarra Ranges, which have been closed to the public for up to 100 years. Melbourne is one of the few cities in the world with protected water catchments.

GREECE, Chalcis
The Inscriptions Painter
(attributed to) *Psykter amphora (Chalkidian black-figure ware)*
Archaic Period, 540 BC
fired clay
60.2 x 37.1 x 34.9 cm
Felton Bequest, 1956



***The watermill* c.1660**
Jacob van Ruisdael was a pioneer of watermill subjects in Dutch art. In 1650-1 Ruisdael toured the eastern provinces of Geldersland and Overijsel. This image of an overshot mill with water entering an open sluice is typical of the mills found in that area near the border between the Netherlands and Germany. Ruisdael later returned to this region with his pupil Meindert Hobbema, who also became a master of mill-painting. Four versions of this waterwheel exist, testament to the fascination in the 17th century with the harnessing of energy.

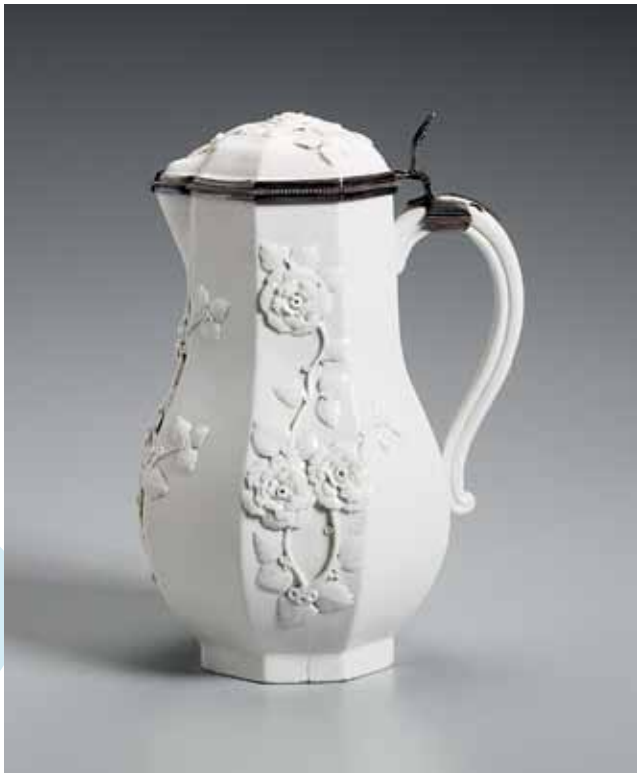
Did you know?
This watermill reminds us that water power has been used for centuries. Today, close to one fifth of the world's electricity comes from hydro-electric power.

Hydro-electricity plays an increasingly important role in providing renewable energy.

However, this source of power is reliant on there being sufficient water flow to drive the turbines of hydro-electric power stations. Water conservation is essential to our continuing use of this source of energy.

NGV KIDS
There are 3 things that begin with the letter 'W' in this painting. What are they?

Jacob van RUISDAEL
Dutch c.1628–1682
The watermill c.1660 (detail)
oil on canvas
63.3 x 68.7 cm
Felton Bequest, 1922



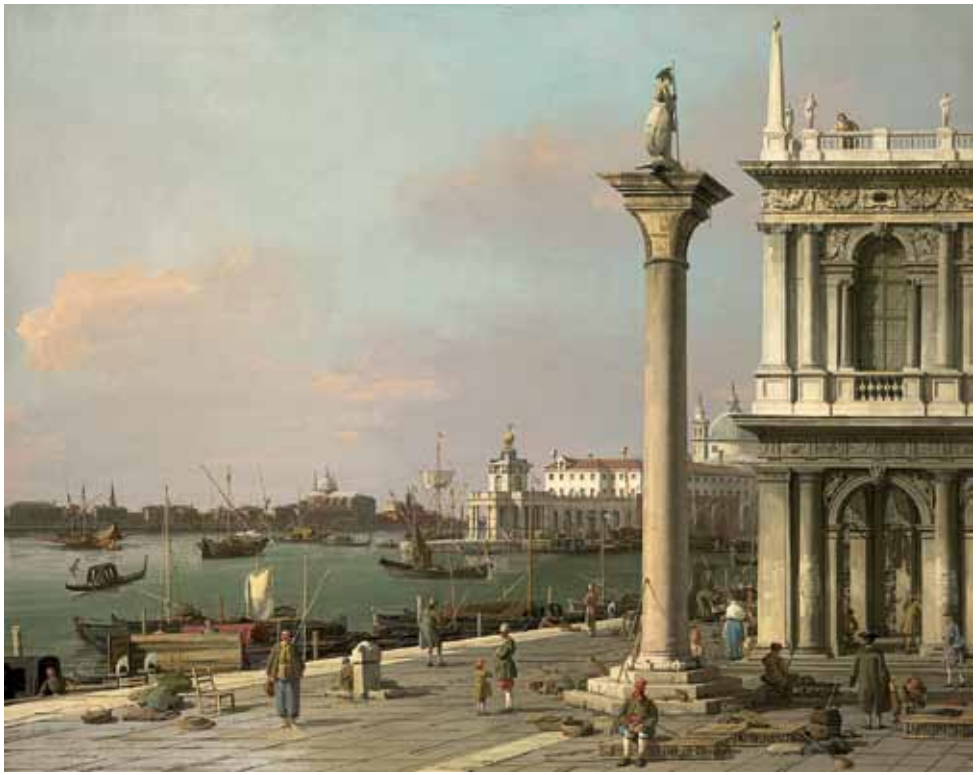
***Covered jug* c.1750**
The beauty of this elegant *Covered jug* lies in its form and an appreciation of the warm, milky glaze highlighted by the applied floral ornament. The faceted form of the ewer is based upon a contemporary silver model but is relatively rare in porcelain. It would most likely have been accompanied by a shallow basin and used for daily ablutions, forming part of the accoutrements of a noble lady's boudoir.

Did you know?
The use of jugs, bowls and other containers to carry water from a central source for drinking, cooking and washing was part of everyday life in the 18th century.

In Victoria, we have experienced years of drought and water restrictions have become a part of life. Target 155 encourages all Melburnians to use less than 155 litres of water per person per day. Most households can achieve this target by adopting three key water saving measures, namely, fitting water-saving showerheads, reducing shower time to four minutes and using greywater or rainwater to water gardens.

NGV KIDS
How much water do you use when you bath or shower? Could you wash thoroughly using a jug or small bucket of water only? Try it!

CHANTILLY PORCELAIN FACTORY, Chantilly (manufacturer)
French c.1730–1792
Covered jug c.1750
porcelain (soft-paste), silver
18.8 x 13.2 x 11.1 cm
The Wynne Morris Collection.
Purchased NGV Foundation, 2008



***Bacino di S. Marco: From the Piazzetta* c.1750**
Built on a network of islands linked only by waterways and bridges, Venice appears to grow from the sea off the North Italian coast. With the ocean as its lifeblood, Venice became a maritime empire in the 16th century, and one of the key trading links between Europe and Asia. Its ports and canal waterways bustled with activity, and the famous Grand Canal, painted in the 1750s, has changed little since then.

However, Venice is under constant threat from rising seas and flooding. Managing this problem is the most important challenge facing this city today.

CANALETTO
Italian 1697–1768,
worked in England 1746–55
Bacino di S. Marco: From the Piazetta c.1750
oil on canvas
131.4 x 163.2 cm
Felton Bequest, 1986

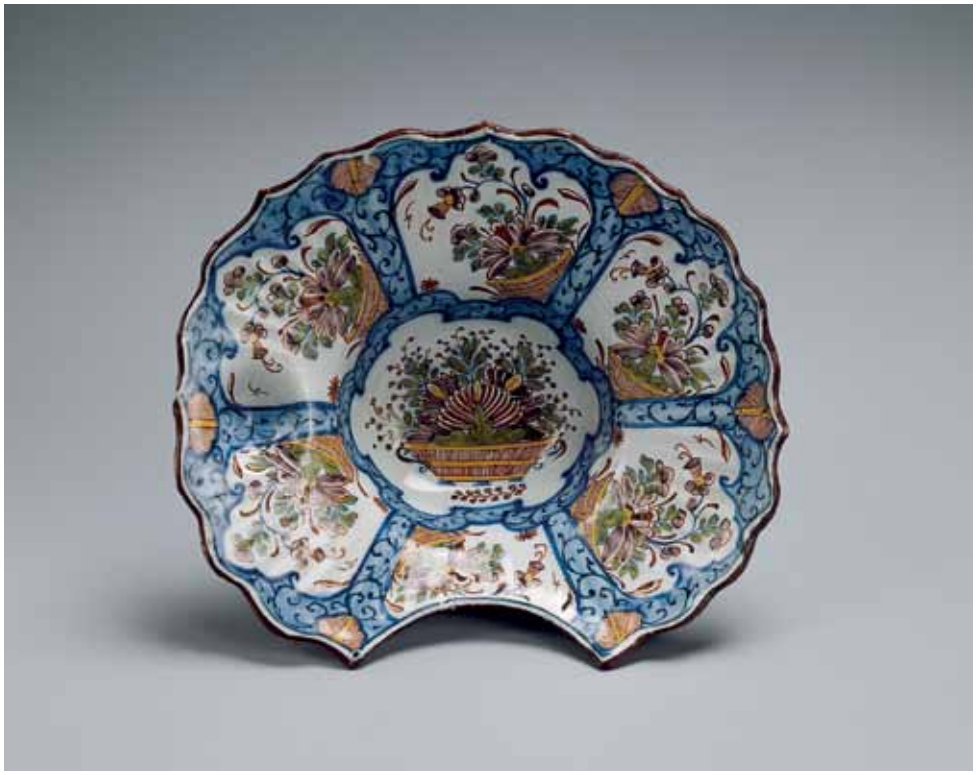
NGV KIDS
A gondola is a water taxi, a gondolier or oarsman stands at the back. How many gondolas can you see?

Did you know?
Canaletto's painting of Venice points to one simple fact: civilisation flourishes where there is a robust water supply.

It is interesting to reflect that many Australian cities have two problems: how to obtain sufficient water for people's needs and how to manage stormwater.

Stormwater is the subject of increasing study, to see if we can solve two problems at once by better managing this valuable resource.

If you have installed a rainwater tank in your home or workplace, you are helping to solve both of these problems.



***Shaving bowl* 1758-1764**
This shaving bowl would have been partially filled with water and placed under the chin of the client while the barber proceeded to shave his face. The bowl provided a convenient means of water, without wastage and without splashing between another bucket or basin.

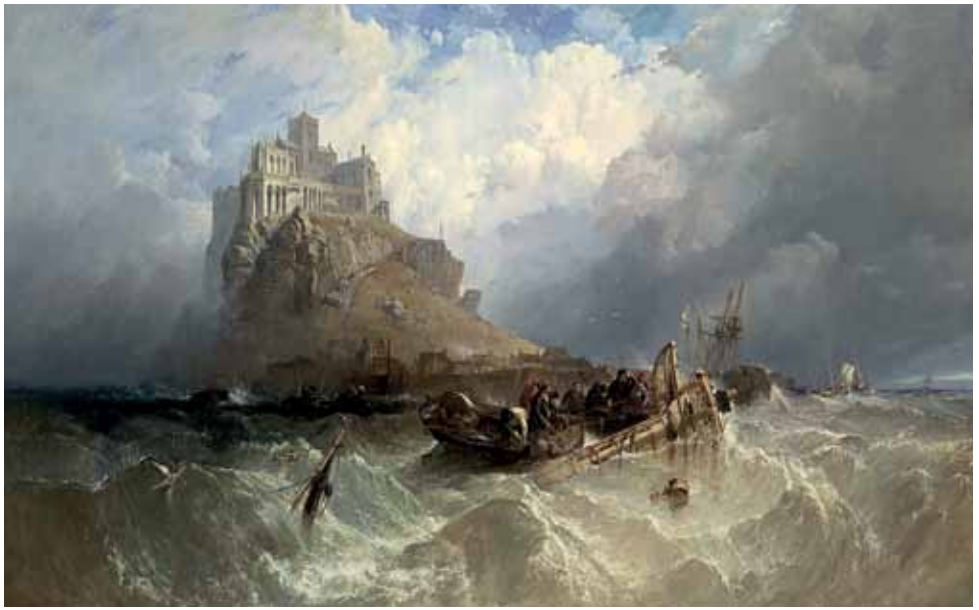
In this era, water had to be carried everywhere from a central source and a shaving bowl such as this would have been very convenient for conserving water usage.

DE GRIEKSCHE A POTTERY (JAN THEUNIS DEXTRA), Delft
(manufacturer) 1758–1764
Shaving bowl 1758–1764
earthenware
7.1 x 26.7 x 23.7 cm
Presented by Frederick Gonnerman Dalgety Esq., 1862

NGV KIDS
A beautiful bowl to collect water. Do you ever use a bucket, bowl or dish to collect water?

Did you know?
The use of the shaving bowl demonstrates a simple method our ancestors developed to conserve water.

There are many ways to save water in the bathroom, laundry, kitchen and other parts of your home. Take shorter showers and keep bathwater to a minimum; don't wash dishes under running water; make sure your dishwasher or washing machine is full before turning it on; divert grey water to your garden; and fix leaking taps and toilets. It is incredible to think that by simply turning off the tap when you brush your teeth, you can save almost 11,000 litres of water a year!



***Mount St Michael, Cornwall* 1830**
Clarkson Stanfield was in a unique position to create this dramatic portrayal of the power of nature seen in the turbulent seas off the Cornish coast, at the south west tip of Britain. Before becoming a painter he spent eight years serving as a merchant seaman.

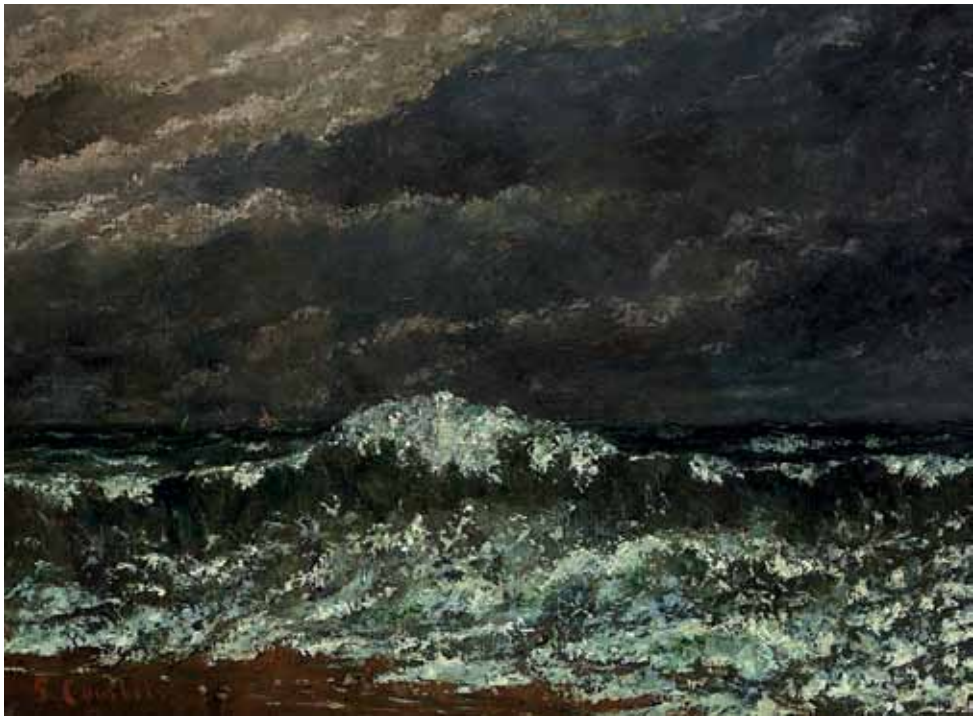
In the 19th century the only way to transport people and goods between islands and continents was by sea. Sailors, such as Stanfield, knew the dangers of taking the ocean for granted as shipwrecks were an all too common occurrence.

Did you know?
Australian climate authorities predict that climate change could cause storms to become more frequent.

Storms have a dramatic impact on our water supplies and on land, and can cause severe flash flooding anywhere and any time. Melbourne's drainage system copes well with most rainfall but it is important for us to keep the system clear of litter and debris. You should also take care to never enter a stormwater drain – they can fill suddenly with water even in sunny conditions.

NGV KIDS
Powerful, deep, rough. What other words describe the ocean and the action in this painting?

Clarkson STANFIELD
English 1793–1867
Mount St Michael, Cornwall 1830 (detail)
oil on canvas
153.2 x 244.0 cm
Gift of J. R. Hartley, 1931



***The wave* c.1872**
The wave is one of numerous paintings that Courbet based on a motif developed at the Normandy coastal resort of Étretat in 1869 – a foaming wave poised in mid-crest under stormy, lowering skies filled with threatening clouds. All of his wave paintings reflect the artist's fascination with the liquid aggression of the ocean. In 1882 the critic Jules Castagnary saw in Courbet's poised waves a vision of approaching political freedom, in which 'Democracy was rising like a cresting wave'.

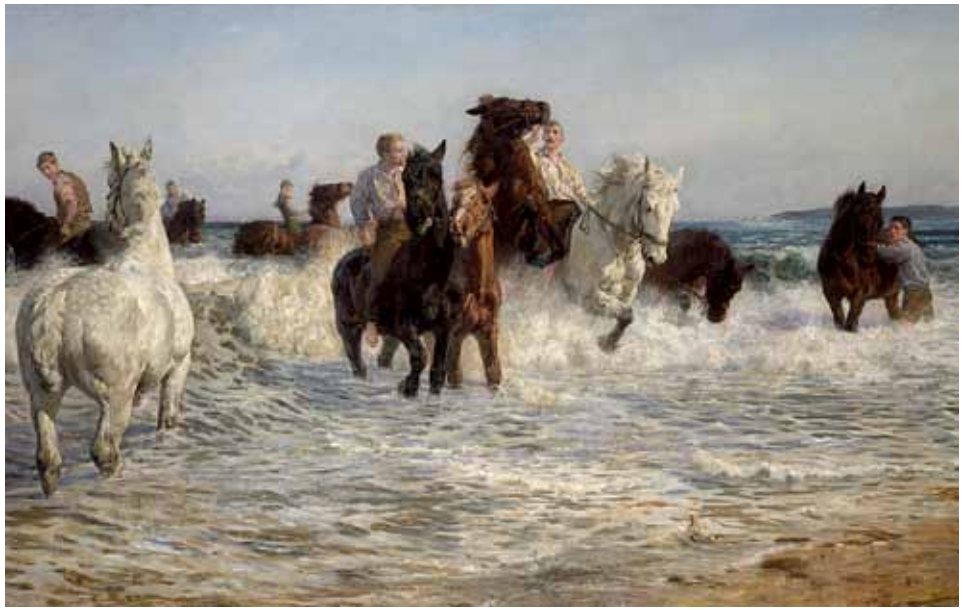
NGV KIDS
Rain filled, dark clouds and a rough stormy ocean. Make up another title/name for this painting.

Did you know?
The oceans play an integral role in the Water Cycle.

The Water Cycle works when the sun's heat causes water from rivers, lakes and oceans to evaporate into the air as vapour, which builds up into fog, mist or clouds. Air temperature and pressure cause the clouds to break apart and rain, hail or snow falls. Small creeks and streams form and then flow into rivers, lakes and oceans, allowing the Water Cycle to begin again.

The water we drink today has always been here on planet Earth. The same water may once have been drunk by a dinosaur!

Gustave COURBET
French 1819–1877,
worked in Switzerland 1873–77
The wave (La Vague) c.1872 (detail)
oil on canvas
54.2 x 73.1 cm
Felton Bequest, 1924



***Horses bathing in the sea* 1900**
This spectacular painting of horses in waves was not just the product of the artist's imagination. Lucy Kemp-Welch set up her easel and huge canvas on the beach so she could experience the power of the sea while painting her monumental work.

Here, she has painted a group of army horses exercising in the invigorating and rejuvenating surf.

Did you know?
The quality of the ocean environment is strongly affected by what we put in our drains. When it rains, pollutants are flushed from the land into drains, then into local rivers and creeks and into the bays. Melbourne's Yarra River is the largest of the 17 waterways that discharge into Port Phillip Bay.

Nearly 400 drains discharge directly to this bay, with a further 600 or more discharging into urban rivers and creeks.

You can help remove some of the pollutants in stormwater by following a few simple tips: dispose of paints and solvents properly, make sure that your rubbish is placed securely in bins and recycling containers so it can't blow away or fall out, and always pick up after your dog.

NGV KIDS
Imagine cold water lapping, horses neighing, men shouting. How would you feel riding horses in the sea?

Lucy KEMP-WELCH
English 1869–1958
Horses bathing in the sea 1900 (detail)
oil on canvas
152.9 x 306.5 cm
Purchased, 1900

Learn

Every language has a word for water …

Atl, Pre-Columbian (Mexican)
Aqua, Italian
Shui 水, Chinese
Paani, Indian (Hindi)
Het, Dutch
Eau, French
Nero, Greek
Wara, Papua New Guinea (Pidgin English)

Find more words for water …

An NGV Water Trail education resource for teachers is available from ngv.vic.gov.au/watertrail/education

Suggested activities for home

Write: Make up a story about being rescued at sea or shipwrecked.

Construct: Cut the top out of a waxed cardboard milk carton to make a boat. Add other boat features with things from home.

Look: Melbourne has many fountains. Keep a watch for them, see how they are decorated.

Collect: When you are near the beach or river see if you can find some stones, shells or wood that have been shaped and smoothed by water. Start a collection of objects 'changed' by water.

Experiment: Half fill a bowl with water, place plastic over the top, and place in the sun. The water should evaporate and condense (form) on the plastic.

Imagine: In ancient Egypt, Sobek was the god of water. He had the body of a man and the head of a crocodile. Draw an imaginary water god. Include signs of power and water.

Check: Are you using water wisely at home?

Design: Make a diagram for a water recycling system for your home.

Draw:
Lay a mirror flat and place a small object on it. Draw the object and its reflection.