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## MY CONTEMPORARY ART BOOK

Meet some of today's leading artists and designers from different parts of the world. Read their stories, find out what inspires them and discover the ideas behind their works of art.

Each artist has included an art activity for you to make at school or at home with your friends.

### FEATURED ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS

KUSHANA BUSH      XU ZHEN

SISSSEL TOLAAS      RON MUECK

ALEXANDRA KEHAYOGLOU

UJI (HAHAN) HANDOKO  
EKO SAPUTRO

N G V



+  
ACTIVITIES FOR KIDS

CREATIVE VICTORIA



# THANK YOU

The National Gallery of Victoria thanks the artists and designers who have generously shared their stories and ideas for this book.

We wish to thank Krystyna Campbell-Pretty and the Campbell-Pretty Family for their generous support of the NGV Kids program.

WE ARE  
FRIENDS AND  
WE LIKE  
TO PLAY!

TOGETHER WE  
MAKE THINGS  
AND DRAW  
PICTURES ...

... AND  
DISCOVER  
NEW  
PLACES.

# ABOUT THIS BOOK

*My Contemporary Art Book* contains stories told by six artists and designers from different parts of the world.

Read about their lives, find out what inspires them and discover the ideas behind their works of art.

Each artist and designer has included an art activity for you to make at school or at home with your friends.





# KUSHANA BUSH

DUNEDIN, NEW ZEALAND



## ABOUT ME

Before I was born, my parents flew halfway around the world to live in Dunedin in New Zealand. They settled in this city and had three children. Dunedin is built on an extinct volcano, which was active more than 10 million years ago. The city lies on the coast, and the surrounding ocean is home to whales, dolphins and sea lions.

## MY ART STUDIO

My studio is on a street corner and reminds me of the shape of a ship. I walk through three sets of doors before I reach my studio. The studio is my magical place where I can be alone with my imagination.

## WHERE I LIVE

My city is very hilly, and we have the steepest residential street in the world! Occasionally, when it snows, school is cancelled. All the children play in the snow, sliding down our street on baking trays for hours on end. Kids own the streets on these snowy days.

## WHEN I WAS LITTLE

I remember drawing a picture of a sad brick house just around the corner from where I lived. I drew the bricks one by one, and felt like I was saying hello to each brick.

KUSHANA SAYS:

DRAWING  
IS A GREAT  
WAY TO SHOW  
LOVE FOR  
SOMETHING.



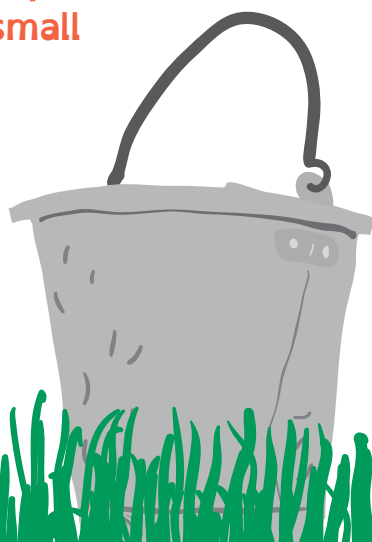


Babes and Fools 2014

## ABOUT MY WORK

I know a little boy who doesn't like wearing shoes. One day I walked home with him from school. By the time we reached my house his feet were black! The idea for this picture was sparked when I washed his small feet in the clean, rushing water.

Can you see the boy in the middle of the painting standing in a dish of water?



# KUSHANA'S ART CHALLENGE!

## DIFFERENT POINTS OF VIEW

Choose a large object for you and a friend to draw.

Sit facing one another on opposite sides of a table, and place the object in between you. Try not to look at each other's work while you are drawing.

When finished, compare the two drawings and marvel at the way that we all see the world differently.



I played this drawing game once with a little girl. I set up a pot plant. When we'd finished, my drawing was of the plant and her picture was of the plastic bag that the plant was sitting in – it was beautiful!





# XU ZHEN

SHANGHAI, CHINA



A close-up of me.

## WHERE I LIVE

Today I live and work in my hometown Shanghai, located along the Huangpu River on the edge of the East China Sea. A very long time ago it used to be a sleepy fishing village. In the 18th and early 19th centuries it became a major port in China. From Shanghai, Chinese goods were sent to all parts of the globe.

In my own lifetime, the population of Shanghai has more than doubled. Today it is one of China's biggest cities and its port is the busiest in the world!

## ABOUT ME

I was born in 1977 in Shanghai, China. My mum was a kindergarten teacher and my dad was a labour contractor.

I grew up at a time when China was changing in every way – villages and towns became big cities, and old buildings were replaced with skyscrapers soaring high in the sky. Living in Shanghai, I saw many of these changes happening all around me. It was very exciting!

## WHEN I WAS LITTLE

In primary school, I attended drawing classes. I didn't like them because the teachers decided what we drew, and I often skipped class.

When I finished high school, I didn't pass the test to enter the Fine Arts Academy. After that I moved to Beijing. I painted every day and spent time talking about art. Then, surprisingly, when I was still quite young I became a famous artist!







Under Heaven 2012 (detail)

## ABOUT MY WORK

This painting reminds me of a cake covered in icing. Instead of painting it with brushes, I squeezed brightly coloured paint onto the canvas through piping bags used by cake decorators. The swirling patterns create a sweet landscape of creamy, colourful paint. Can you see swirls of strawberry red, purple the colour of grapes and milky white?

The work is from a series titled *Under Heaven*. This Chinese expression is used to describe what the world looks like from above; a bit like a bird's-eye view.

XU ZHEN'S  
**ART CHALLENGE!**

I want you to draw the **BIGGEST** drawing you can!





# SISSEL TOLAAS

BERLIN, GERMANY



## WHERE I WAS BORN

I grew up on Stord, which is an island in the North Sea off the west coast of Norway. As a child I did everything on or in the water. I used to go fishing, sailing and swimming. From an early age I was fascinated with air and breathing. I grew up wanting to be an astronaut or a scuba diver. What do you want to be?

## ABOUT ME

Today I am a smell researcher working in the fields of art, design and science. I became interested in the idea of working with smells and smelling almost thirty years ago. I want to help people understand how amazing our sense of smell is. Did you know that every time we breathe in, we inhale many different smells? These smells can tell us a lot about our surroundings.

SISSEL SAYS:

THERE IS A  
WORLD OF SMELLS,  
AND A WHOLE  
WORLD OF PEOPLE  
TO EDUCATE ABOUT  
HOW TO SMELL.

## WHEN I WAS LITTLE

I loved collecting things. I had five sisters. As you can imagine, we had to share a lot of things. The only thing I did not want to share with my sisters was my collection of stones, shells and fishbones from the ocean. My bed looked and smelled like an archaeological dig!





## ABOUT MY WORK

### *SMELLSCAPE MELBOURNE: PAST PRESENT PAST*

This project is about Melbourne and its smells. I like to try to make people think about places in a new way by creating works of art based on smell. Smells have a tremendous power to trigger memories and emotions. Did you know memories of smells can stay with us for our entire lives?

When you visit my work in the art gallery, you will be able to touch surfaces with different smells – your touch will make the smell stronger. I hope the project helps people share memories with each other and generate new memories for the future. Some smells might remind people of things they have smelled before, while others will be very strange and new. There is no right or wrong, there are only smells.

SISSEL'S

# ART CHALLENGE!

**WHAT'S THAT SMELL?**  
Pair up with a friend for this smelling challenge.  
Can you guess the item by its smell?





# RON MUECK

ISLE OF WIGHT, UNITED KINGDOM



## ABOUT ME

My parents came from Germany to Australia after the Second World War and met on the ship. I was born in Melbourne a year later. I lived and worked in Melbourne until I was twenty-three and then I left to work in New York. Now I live and work in the United Kingdom with my wife, and we have two grown-up children.

## WHEN I WAS LITTLE

We lived in a flat. My mum had a workroom which took up half the dining room. There was a partition that split the room in two: on one side we had dinner, and on the other side mum made dolls from felt which she sold to private customers and shops.

My dad was a painter and decorator. He painted murals on our bedroom walls and made us a rocking horse carved from wood.

In my first year of primary school I made a snail out of plasticine which my teacher liked so much she displayed it on a shelf for everyone to admire. I felt so proud ... I guess that was my first exhibition.

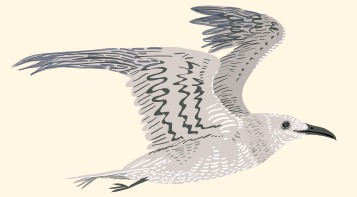




Two women 2005

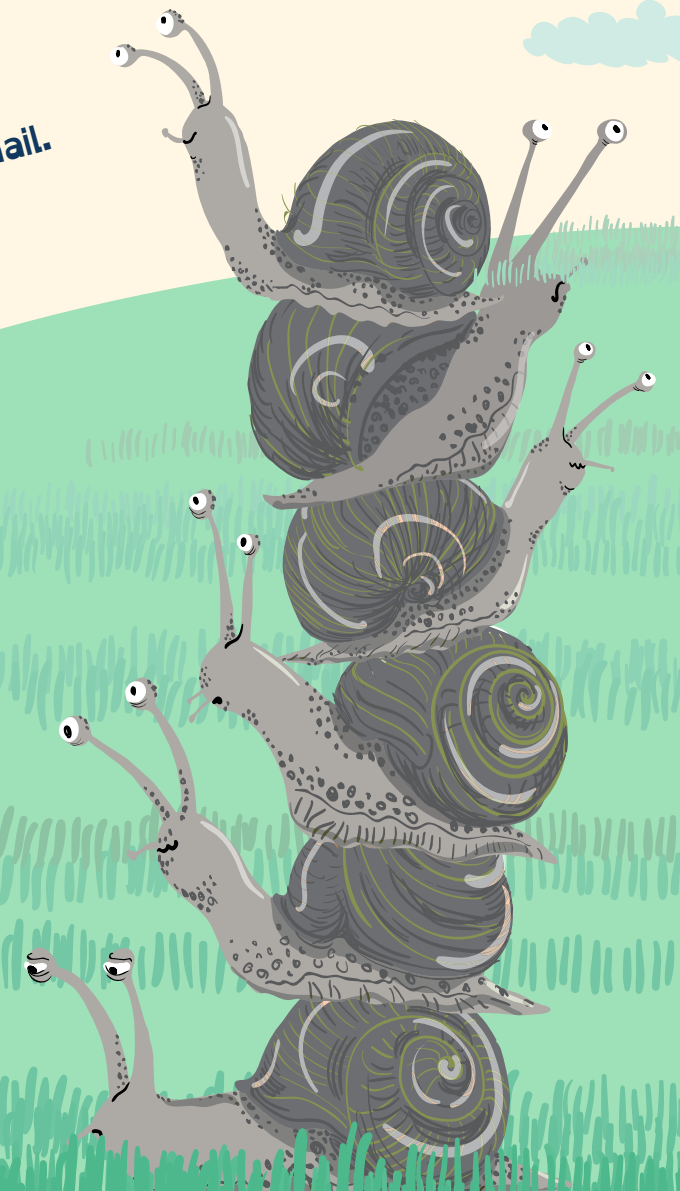
## ABOUT MY ART WORK

I was walking down the street and saw two little old ladies talking together. Suddenly they turned and looked straight at me like I was interrupting their conversation. It left a strong impression on me as I walked away. I kept wondering what they were talking about and why they looked at me that way. What was going on in their minds?



RON'S  
**ART CHALLENGE!**

Using modeling clay, make a snail.  
The best snail you can make.





# ALEXANDRA KEHAYOGLOU

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA



## ABOUT ME

I was born in 1981 and grew up in Buenos Aires, Argentina. I am a visual artist and make large sculptures using wool and textiles. I am inspired by the countryside of Argentina. It is a large country with different climates, different cultures and interesting landscapes. My work is about my memories of these landscapes and the environment.

Many years before I was born, my grandparents left Greece and moved to Argentina. In Greece they made rugs, carpets and textiles. One of the only things they brought in their luggage was a loom, and I remember my grandmother using it to weave carpets. She passed on her skills to her children, and years later one of her sons – my father – taught me how to make carpets too.

## WHEN I WAS LITTLE

I spent a lot of time playing in the garden surrounded by plants, flowers and trees. I loved storms and the smell of wet mud. After the rain, I remember thinking that time seemed to stand still. I would go outside and walk in the park. I would look for baby birds that might have fallen from their nests, so that I could take care of them.



ALEXANDRA SAYS:

THESE SPECIAL MOMENTS FROM WHEN I WAS A CHILD INFLUENCE THE WORK I MAKE TODAY.

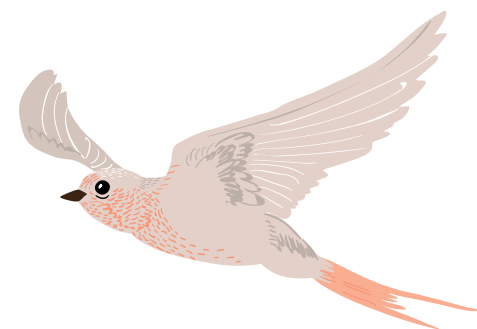
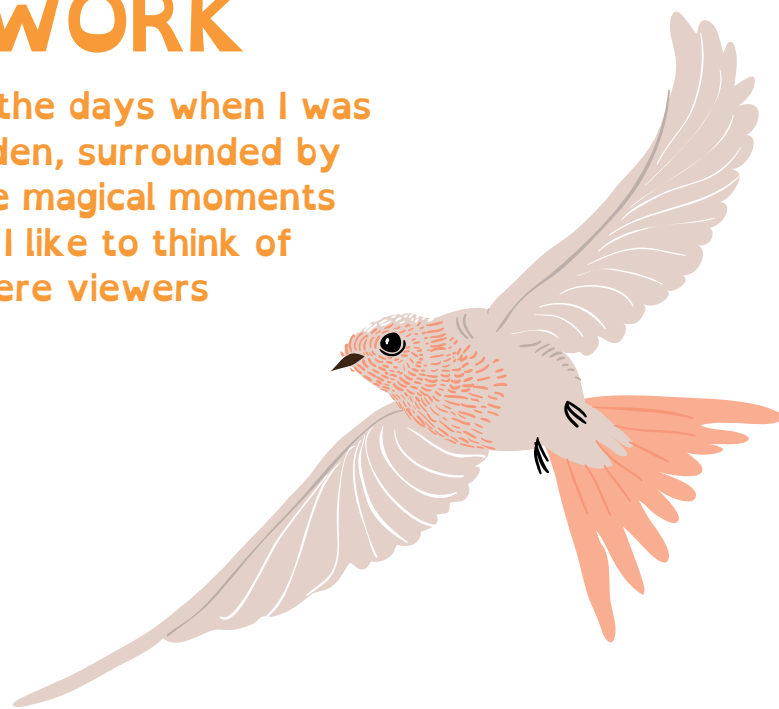




Refugio para un recuerdo 2012

## ABOUT MY WORK

This carpet reminds me of the days when I was little and played in my garden, surrounded by trees and birds. Those were magical moments that I will treasure forever. I like to think of this carpet as a shelter where viewers can think and meditate.



ALEXANDRA'S  
**ART CHALLENGE!**

Draw a  
picture of  
an imaginary  
tree house.





# UJI (HAHAN) HANDOKO EKO SAPUTRO

YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA



## MY ART STUDIO

In the morning my friends visit me in the studio. We talk about my works of art and plan projects together. We listen to music while we work, and have lunch together. In the afternoon we continue working in the studio. In the evenings we might hang out in the studio and play video games or head into the city to see an exhibition or music performance.

## ABOUT ME

My friends and family all call me Hahan but my real name is Uji Handoko Eko Saputro, which means 'influential first son'. I come from Indonesia. I grew up in a small town named Magelang, near Yogyakarta.

## WHERE I LIVE

These days I live and work in Yogyakarta. I moved here to study art when I was nineteen. My art studio is a small house in a quiet village surrounded by rice paddies. I start my morning with a coffee and read the news on the internet. Sometimes I sketch ideas from my reading or finish drawings made the day before.

## WHEN I WAS LITTLE

I liked playing Hide-and-Seek after night prayers at the mosque. I am good at finding places to hide. My father used to breed fish at our house. After school I would play with my dad's catfish and carp.





Speculative Entertainment No. 1  
Yogyakarta Edition 2016 (detail)



HAHAN  
DIVIDED HIS  
ARTWORK  
INTO 1000+  
PIECES!

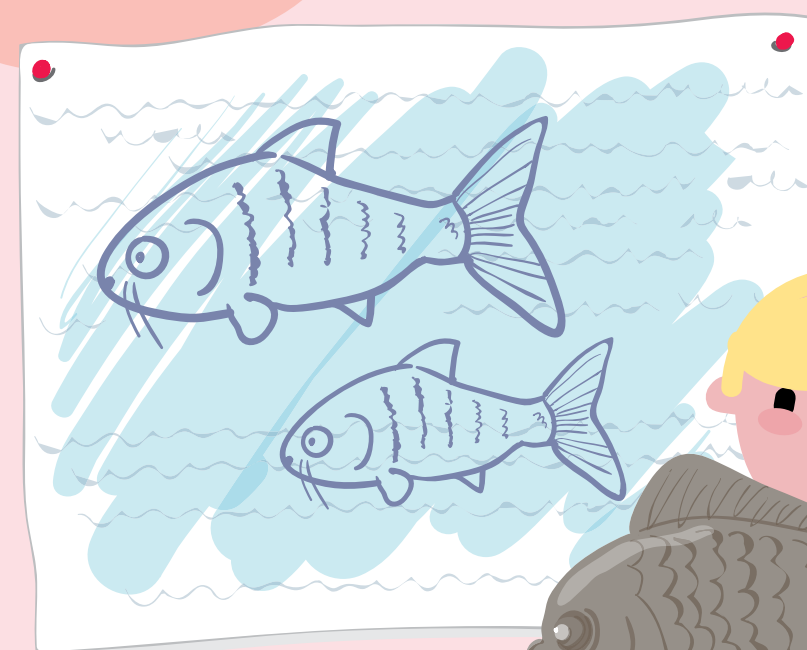
## ABOUT MY WORK

I displayed this work at an exhibition and art fair in Yogyakarta, Hong Kong and Sydney. My idea was to sell it piece by piece at an affordable price – there were more than 1000 little square pieces of artwork!

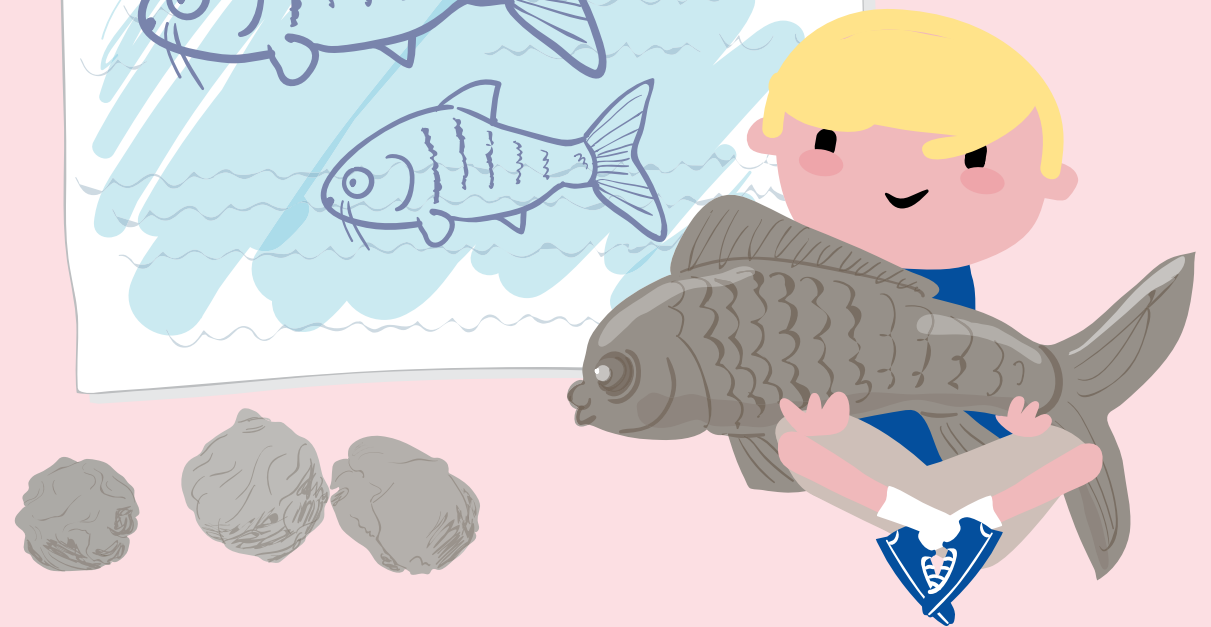
I made up a set of rules about buying and selling – a bit like a game. These rules were based on the real art market where some people buy art in the hope that in the future it will sell for a higher price and make lots of money.

During the exhibition, any person viewing the work can experience what it's like to be an art collector. I give them the chance to enjoy the opportunity to buy art and wonder about its future – will it make money for them one day?

## HAHAN'S ART CHALLENGE!



Make a drawing  
of your favourite  
animal, then turn it  
into a sculpture using  
modeling clay.





# IMAGES AND ART WORKS



**Kushana Bush**  
*Babes and Fools* 2014  
gouache and pencil on paper  
56.5 x 66.0 cm  
Private collection, Wellington  
© Kushana Bush



**Ron Mueck**  
*Two women* 2005  
polyester resin, fibreglass, silicone, polyurethane,  
aluminium wire, steel, wool, cotton, nylon, synthetic  
hair, plastic, metal, ed. 1/1  
82.6 x 48.7 x 41.5 cm (variable)  
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne  
Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living  
Australian Artists, 2007  
© Ron Mueck



**Xu Zhen**  
Detail from the *Under Heaven* series 2012  
oil paint on canvas and aluminium  
Collection of the artist  
© Xu Zhen



**Alexandra Kehayoglou**  
*Refugio para un recuerdo* 2012  
textile (handtuft system), retrieved wool 100% natural  
270 x 500 cm  
Collection of the artist  
© Alexandra Kehayoglou  
Photograph © Francisco Nocito



**Uji (Hahan) Handoko Eko Saputro**  
*Speculative Entertainment No. 1*  
*Yogyakarta Edition* 2016  
performative site-specific installation  
Audience picking their lots  
© Hahan  
Photograph © Fajar Riyanto