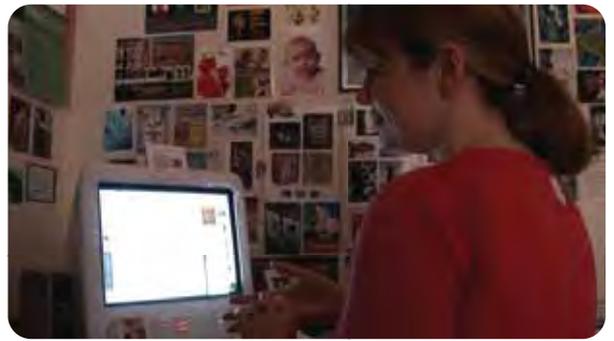


# Counihan Connection



Teachers' Notes

# Introduction

This study guide to accompany *Counihan Connection* has been written for teachers of senior secondary students. It provides information and suggestions for learning activities in Visual Arts.

*Counihan Connection* is a DVD containing a series of short films. Each film focuses on how one artist has interpreted Noel Counihan's art and created a new work. The film follows the artist as he or she creates their artwork. The artists are George Gittoes, Kristin McFarlane, Angela Cavaliere, Satta van Daal and William Kelly.

The works were created for the Counihan Gallery in Brunswick.

Each artist works in a different medium, and has approached the task of creating a work inspired by the art of Noel Counihan in a different way. The films look at the research method, the creation of the work, the relationship of politics and art, aspects of interpretation, the nature of the artistic medium, and the views of the artist.

Further information about the series and film trailers can be found at <http://www.snodger.com.au/counihan/> or on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/pinkcat1>

## The DVD

The Counihan Connection DVD includes five fifteen minute films on each of the following artists:

- Angela Cavaliere
- Satta van Daal
- George Gittoes
- William Kelly
- Kristin McFarlane

It also includes short films on:

- Edwina Batlem, the curator
- Robert Smith remembers Noel Counihan

## Curator's Statement

Edwina Bartlem

*Curator*

To celebrate the Counihan Gallery In Brunswick's 10th anniversary, selected contemporary artists have been invited to create new art works in response to the themes and style of works by the gallery's namesake, Noel Counihan. The responsive new works will be exhibited along-side original Counihan works to emphasise continuities and ruptures between past and present, while acknowledging the significant contribution that Noel Counihan made to Australian art and human rights.



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## Noel Counihan

Noel Counihan was born in 1913 in Albert Park, then a working-class suburb of Melbourne.

In 1931 Counihan became a member of the Communist Party of Australia. He helped found the Workers Art Guild, and began printmaking, producing linocuts and lithographs for Communist magazine covers and pamphlets as well as designing banners. He saw firsthand the effects of the Great Depression on the unemployed.

During the Great Depression Counihan combined his art with his politics and created proto-performance art when he caged himself as part of the 'free speech' fights in Sydney Road in Melbourne. He was arrested once the police were finally able to break into the cage.

From 1934 Counihan worked as a caricaturist for various publications, including *The Bulletin*.

He spent extended periods in hospital with tuberculosis during the Second World War. He did not fight in that war.

In his art Counihan developed a personal style based on the social realist approach, producing images of workers

and their working lives.

In 1940, Noel married Pat Edwards. They had two children, Terry and Mick.

During the 1940s Counihan entered into a famous debate with Albert Tucker about the nature of Marxist art. These letters were published in Max Harris' *Angry Penguins* journal.

Counihan travelled widely on a number of occasions and visited Europe in 1949 as a delegate to the World Congress of Peace. On that trip he saw the Warsaw Ghetto and some of the Soviet Communist countries.

Counihan was close friends with the writer Judah Waten, and the painter Josl Bergner.

Counihan died in Melbourne aged 73.

The Counihan Gallery, managed by City of Moreland Council, is named in his honour.

The art of Noel Counihan can be found in most of the major Australian public galleries. Visit the website of your state or regional gallery to find out which pictures are in their collection. There are links to some works at: <http://www.snodger.com.au/counihan/resources.php>

### Extra reading:

- *Noel Counihan: Artist and revolutionary*, Bernard Smith
- *Noel Counihan: Artist as activist*, Robert Smith
- *Rebels and Precursors: the revolutionary years of Australian art*, Richard Haese
- *Angry Penguins*, especially Tucker's article in No.4, p49 and Counihan's reply in September 1943 which you can read at: <http://www.snodger.com.au/counihan/resources.php>
- ADB entry: <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A170253b.htm>
- Counihan Gallery in Brunswick web site: <http://www.moreland.vic.gov.au/arts-and-festivals/counihan-gallery.html>



## Angela Cavalieri

Angela Cavalieri was born in Melbourne into an Italian family. Cavalieri's inspiration for her art derives from her migrant family background, Italian being her first language.

After repeating a year of school especially so she could study art, Cavalieri studied printmaking at the Victorian College of the Arts.

Since 1984, she has exhibited in solo exhibitions at various venues. 'Racconto', a significant retrospective exhibition, was held at ICON, Deakin University Art Museum in 2007.

Cavalieri explores the art of writing in visual form. In her large scale hand-cut lino prints, literary, religious and historical narratives eventually manifest as image. Sources for the text in her work include poetry, religious epitaphs and inscriptions on public buildings.

Cavalieri has been awarded several prizes including the Geelong Print Prize Acquisitive Award, 2009, the Silk Cut Print Award, 2000 and the Shell Fremantle Print Award, 1999.

Extra reading:

Angela Cavalieri's website: <http://www.angelacavalieri.com/>



## Satta van Daal

Satta van Daal studied Product Design at the Bauhaus University Weimar (GER) and the Design Academy Eindhoven (NL).

Van Daal moved to Melbourne in early 2003. His first stencil - a clenched fist holding barbed wire - can still be seen around Fitzroy and other places in Melbourne.

Van Daal's art has been exhibited in a number of solo and group exhibitions in Australia, Europe, Iran and America. His works have appeared in various local, national and international publications.

In 2004, van Daal co-organised the first Melbourne Stencil Festival. The annually held festival included international street art exhibitions, live painting demonstrations, workshops, charity auctions, panel discussions, and film nights.

Since 2007, van Daal has shifted his focus back to creating his own art instead of event organising. In 2009 van Daal launched SattaStudio, his own graphic and product design business.

The image van Daal used in his stencil was taken during the Vietnam War in 1967 by Philip Jones Griffiths.

Extra reading:

- Satta van Daal's website: <http://www.stencorama.com/>



## George Gittoes

George Gittoes was born in 1949.

George Gittoes creates art in a variety of media. He uses painting, film, and sculpture. He creates works that are designed for art galleries and also creates works designed for mass consumption, eg his TV documentaries.

Gittoes often travels to war zones and his art is inspired by his observations of the theatre of war. Some of the war zones he has visited include Rwanda during the massacre, Cambodia in the 1990s, Iraq during the second gulf war, and Afghanistan.

Gittoes also paints images of workers in heavy industry. He sees this as another battlefield.

In 1997 he was awarded an Order of Australia 'for service to art and international relations as an artist and photographer portraying the effects on the environment of war, international disasters and heavy industry'.

He has won a number of prizes including the Blake Painting Prize (1992 and 1995) and the Wynne Prize (1993)

Gittoes currently lives in Germany.

Extra reading:

- George Gittoes's website: <http://www.gittoes.com/>



## William Kelly

William Kelly was born in Buffalo, New York. Kelly studied at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, the University of the Arts (Philadelphia, USA) and at the National Gallery School, Melbourne, Australia.

Kelly was a Fulbright Scholar and later became Dean at the Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne.

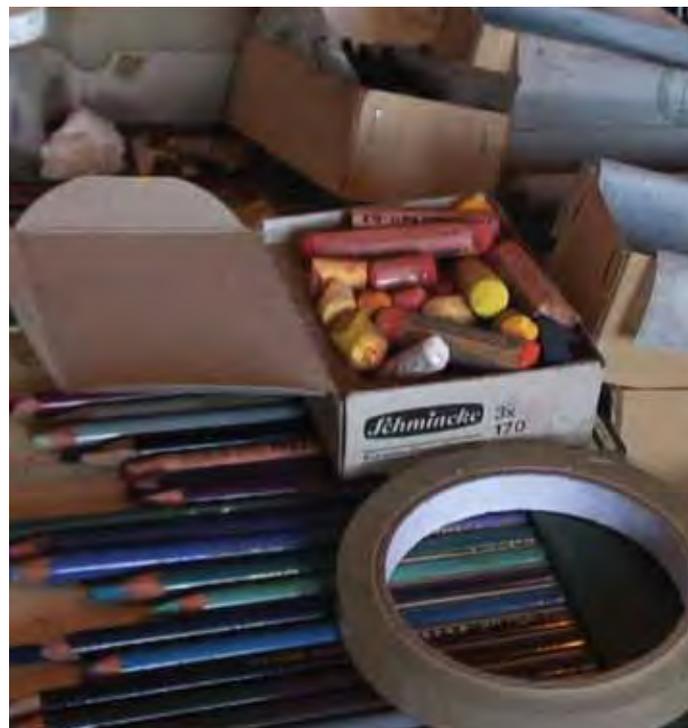
Today Kelly is a painter and his art is characterised by a humanist approach and socially committed creative practice.

Kelly has represented Australia in the International United Nations Human Rights Print Portfolio (in collaboration with Aboriginal artist, Benjamin McKeown) and, recently, he has been selected to represent Australia in the international print folio "Dialogue Among Nations" organised by Art for Humanity, Durban, South Africa.

Kelly maintains a studio in rural Victoria.

Extra reading:

- William Kelly's website: <http://www.williamkelly.com.au/>



## Kristin McFarlane

Kristin McFarlane was born in Melbourne in 1968.

She studied art at the Caulfield campus of Monash University.

McFarlane combined her love of literature and art to become a graphic designer. Unsatisfied with the lack of creativity required in the commercial design industry she left to pursue glassmaking.

McFarlane considers glass a perfect medium for allowing a permanent memory of an event, time and place to be recorded in a sculptural work or piece of jewellery to hold, treasure and revisit at will. Her objective is to 'capture memory'.

In 2002, she married her partner John Hoogendoorn and they have one child, Jade.

Since 2004 Kristin has been commissioned to create the Australian of the Year trophies and more recently trophies for Her Majesty Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan.

Extra reading:

- Kristin McFarlane's website: <http://www.kristinmcfarlane.com/>

## Director's Statement

Catherine Gough-Brady

Catherine Gough-Brady is a documentary maker. Her documentaries are about a variety of subjects and for a variety of media. You can find out more about her by visiting [www.snodger.com.au/catherine/](http://www.snodger.com.au/catherine/)

Statement

Art that is hanging in a gallery is considered precious and untouchable. It takes on a reverential value. The Counihan Connection films explore what the art is like when it is still in the hands of the artist.

The films are set in the studios of the artists, they are covered in charcoal, paint, ink and solvents. The artists walk on their art, pin it up with drawing pins and spray over old canvases. The art is not yet precious, it's a work in progress.

And so the style of filming reflects this. The films are a combination of hand held observational camera with on the spot the interviews. There is nothing staged or precious in the style of the filmmaking.

Joseph Brady's syncopated music rounds off the irreverential feel of the images.



## Formal or Structural Framework

- Watch Counihan Connection: Gittoes. What can be understood about Gittoes's character and his philosophical outlook from analysing his artworks?
- Watch Counihan Connection: Gittoes. Research 'humanism' and create a sketch, marquette or storyboard for a work that you feel expresses humanist ideals. Explain to the class how your artwork expresses the ideals.
- Watch Counihan Connection: Van Daal. Do you agree with Van Daal that Counihan's images have a timeless quality and would work as street art today?
- Watch Counihan Connection: Van Daal. Choose an existing image, either historical or contemporary, and adapt it to create a street art stencil or paste-up. Discuss with your class why you felt that image would be effective street art.
- Watch Counihan Connection: McFarlane. Do you think McFarlane's artwork expresses notions of family support? What aspects of the work express this idea?
- Watch Counihan Connection: McFarlane. Research an artist. How would you create an artwork that embodied that artist? What materials would you use?
- In Counihan Connection: Cavaleri, Cavaleri feels

is it is not important to be able to read the text in her work. Do you agree?

- Watch Counihan Connection: Cavaleri. Create an artwork that uses text in a visual way. Discuss the text you used with the class and talk about how you transformed it from text into an image.
- In Counihan Connection: Kelly, Kelly does not think it is important for the viewer to understand the story behind his images. Do you agree?
- In Counihan Connection: Kelly, Kelly says that the paper remembers every mark. Create a work from paper. How can the 'memory' of the paper be used to your advantage?



## Personal or Subjective Framework

- Watch Counihan Connection: Gittoes. Gittoes talks about the difference between photographs and drawing. Draw or sculpt an image from life. Then photograph it. Discuss how they are different.
- Watch Counihan Connection: Gittoes. Research one of Gittoes's paintings. Write a personal response to the work. Include a discussion of how the artwork evoked your emotions.
- Watch Counihan Connection: Van Daal. Street art often appropriates existing images. Do you feel this is laziness, or an important part of the artform? Should the original creator of the image be acknowledged?
- Watch Counihan Connection: Van Daal. Street art is an external artform, the images are not personal because they are so clearly placed in the public sphere. Discuss.
- Watch Counihan Connection: McFarlane. Collect samples of handwriting and create an artwork from this.
- Watch Counihan Connection: McFarlane. Do female artists have a distinct outlook on the world? Discuss.
- In Counihan Connection: Cavellieri, Cavellieri talks about failing art at school. She is now a well respected artist. Discuss what parts of art appreciation and criticism are subjective, cultural or objective.
- Watch Counihan Connection: Cavellieri. To create her artwork Cavellieri needs help from friends and family. Write a newspaper feature article of 500 words about her process of creating the artwork.
- In Counihan Connection: Kelly, Kelly uses the same image elements in different works, such as Ned Kelly's armour and the planes that bombed Guernica. What images have had a profound effect on you, and how do you use them in your art?
- Watch Counihan Connection: Kelly. Do you feel that Kelly is an Australian artist, even though he was born and brought up in the US? What do you feel makes an artist Australian?



## Cultural Framework

- Watch Counihan Connection: Gittoes. Research social realism. Why do you think Communists preferred to create social realist art?
- Visit your State Library. Read the debates between Albert Tucker and Noel Counihan in the *Angry Penguins* magazine about social realism (Issue 4 and the September 1943 issue). Prepare a summary for your class on these debates. *Note:* these article can also be found at: <http://www.snodger.com.au/counihan/resources.php>
- In Counihan Connection: Van Daal, Van Daal talks about moving to Melbourne because of the strong street art scene. What led to the rise of the street art scene? Have attitudes to street art changed over the years?
- Watch Counihan Connection: Van Daal. Photograph street art in your city. How has the location and placement of the art affected the power or meaning of the work? Does the location create a subtext or ironic interpretation for the image?
- Watch Counihan Connection: McFarlane. McFarlane's artwork for Counihan Connection is a Feminist piece of art. Discuss.
- Watch Counihan Connection: McFarlane. Find an artist that lives in your city. Interview them about the support, emotional and financial that they receive. Are they able to live off their art, or do they need to supplement their income?
- In Counihan Connection: Cavellieri. How has Cavellieri's Italian background influenced her artwork? What elements of her work are not taken from her cultural heritage?
- Watch Counihan Connection: Cavellieri. Cavellieri does not want to create artworks 'that match the couch' for clients. Discuss with the class how you would find a balance between you work for clients and your creative work.
- In Counihan Connection: Kelly, Kelly uses an image of Albert Namitjera as the central piece to his work. Research Albert Namitjera. How did his aboriginality influence his work?
- In Counihan Connection: Kelly, Kelly uses an image of Ned Kelly. Research the story and images of Ned Kelly. How would you depict the various aspects of Ned Kelly in an artwork?