

PHOTO 2022

International Festival of Photography

29 April – 22 May 2022
photo.org.au



YOUNG PERSON'S GUIDE

Self-guided visits
and questions for discussion

For schools and families

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WELCOME

PHOTO 2022 invites schools and families to experience a vibrant program of contemporary art and culture during autumn 2022. Featuring free exhibitions and displays in iconic and unexpected sites across Melbourne, PHOTO 2022 is a celebration of photography, art, and creativity from Australia and around the world.

The *PHOTO 2022 Young Person's Guide* brings together a curated selection of exciting and thought-provoking installations, inspiring a journey in and around the CBD at venues including Fed Square, Parliament, State Library, Birrarung Walk - Southbank Promenade, and Melbourne's renowned laneways.

ABOUT PHOTO 2022

Located in Melbourne and extending to cities across regional Victoria, PHOTO is Australia's largest photography event and is delivered in collaboration with over 50 cultural, education, industry and government partners.

Responding to a central theme, the biennial invites artists, curators, academics and audiences to interrogate the major issues of our time through a program of exhibitions in galleries and outdoor locations, alongside events and professional development programs. Dedicated to contemporary photography, the focus is on premiering new work alongside exclusive presentations by international artists.

Responding to the theme of 'The Truth', PHOTO 2021 (originally conceived as PHOTO 2020) explored the veracity of the photographic image in a time of social media, fake news, and artificial intelligence.

PHOTO 2022's theme is 'Being Human' and addresses the contemporary human condition through the lens of Mortality, Self, Society, Nature and History.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

PHOTO 2022 respectfully acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands upon which we work and live, and the rich and diverse Indigenous cultures across what is now called Australia. For over 60,000 years, Indigenous arts and culture have thrived on this sacred land, and we honour Elders and cultural leaders past and present.

This was and always will be Aboriginal land.

PLANNING A SELF-GUIDED VISIT TO PHOTO 2022 WITH YOUR FAMILY OR SCHOOL GROUP

WHERE TO START

The *PHOTO 2022 Young Person's Guide* highlights ten outdoor exhibitions and artworks, and three indoor exhibitions.

We recommend parents, guardians and educators choose one of the four CBD Festival Precincts as a starting point (Town Hall, Parliament, River or State Library). Each precinct has several venues located nearby one another and so it is easy to choose more than one and make the most of your visit.

Beyond the *PHOTO 2022 Young Person's Guide* there are many more exhibitions to visit during the festival. Visit photo.org.au to find all the details or pick up a PHOTO 2022 Festival Guide from an exhibition venue.

OPENING HOURS AND BOOKING REQUIREMENTS

Most of the venues profiled in the *PHOTO 2022 Schools and Families Guide* are presented outdoors and can be viewed day or night without a prior booking. For the indoor exhibitions *Gillian Wearing: Editing Life* at ACMI, *Vasantha Yoganathan: Afterlife* at Sofitel and *Aziz Hazara: I am looking for you like a drone, my love* at Fiona and Sidney Myer Gallery, we recommend you check the venue websites for specific opening hours and booking requirements before your visit.


CHOOSING EXHIBITIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

The *PHOTO 2022 Young Person's Guide* introduces various themes and stories that run through the festival as well as prompts to encourage conversations about the art you will see along the way. While the guide is broadly written for school-aged young people aged between 8-18, PHOTO 2022 recommends parents, guardians and educators consider the specific age/s, interests, social and cultural sensitivities of the children in their care as they review the guide and choose exhibitions that are appropriate for them.

FOR VCE STUDIO ARTS

PHOTO 2022 encourages VCE Studio Arts students and their teachers to visit the festival in relation to Unit 4, Outcome 3, Art Industry Contexts. The exhibition *Christian Thompson: Being Human Human Being* is profiled in detail on page 43 of this guide

ACCESS

Venues that are wheelchair accessible are marked with . While care has been taken to place outdoor exhibitions in locations as accessible as possible, some access may be restricted. If you intend to visit any indoor galleries during your visit please contact the venue/s to discuss specific access requirements before you arrive.

BEING COVID-SAFE

Each PHOTO 2022 venue has a COVID-SAFE plan and we request that all visitors follow directions along the way. Stay at home if you are unwell. Teachers who are planning a group excursion to PHOTO 2022 should follow current COVID-SAFE directions of their school.

GETTING AROUND

Many of the PHOTO 2022 venues are within walking distance from one another. Travel on Melbourne's public transport system requires a myki card, except for travel within the free tram zone within Melbourne's CBD.

Visit ptv.vic.gov.au/journey to plan your trip.

PHOTO 2022 THEME: BEING HUMAN

PHOTO 2022 encourages us to see, think and wonder about what it means to be alive and human in today's world through five main storylines: society, mortality, self, nature, history.

SOCIETY

How important is it for humans to take care of one another?

What kind of things happen when people come together?

What kind of spaces and environments do people share today?



The past couple of years have been a time of immense change for everyone all around the world with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Massimo Vitali's large-scale photographs document scenes of Italians relaxing and returning to the sea and sun to enjoy a beach holiday together after months of isolation and quarantine.

MORTALITY

Can you find artworks that represent people of various ages?

How do humans change as they age?

Where are you along life's journey at the moment?



PHOTO 2022 celebrates every stage of human life from pregnancy and birth through to old age, and death. Annie Wang's series of black and white self-portraits visualises this idea as the artist documents changes in her relationship with her son over many years.

Some artists ask us to wonder about the limits of the human body. Matthieu Gafsou asks us to consider what might happen if human bodies blend with technology in the future. Could cyborgs become reality? Meanwhile Vasantha Yoganathan's photographs attempt to capture the spiritual figures inspired by the ancient Dussehra festival in India.

SELF

What is a portrait?

What aspects of ourselves do we choose to share when we are being photographed?

How do artists symbolise aspects of our identity through portraiture?

PHOTO 2022 invites us to reflect on ideas of identity through the many possibilities of contemporary portraiture.

Emerging Kenyan artist Thandiwe Muriu celebrates the cultural identity of African women through bright patterns and traditional textiles. Celebrated New York-based artist Cindy Sherman creates personas through body language, clothing, and performance. Meanwhile London-based artist Gillian Wearing explores a sophisticated AI technique known as deepfakes to digitally superimpose her face onto others, using her own likeness as a mask.



NATURE

Can you see any photographs that are inspired by the natural world?

What do you think they express about humankind's relationship with the environment?



Nature is a constant source of inspiration for humankind and our relationship with the environment is in constant flux. Many contemporary artists in PHOTO2022 are concerned about the impacts of climate change and ask us to reflect on how we can live in the world more sustainably.

Angela Tiatia's video work *Holding On* features the artist struggling not to be washed away by an incoming tide on the Pacific Island of Tuvalu which is affected by rising sea levels. Christian Thompson's new commission *Being Human Human* offers a glimpse into his indigenous culture and ancestral history as he disappears into a wall of flowers.

HISTORY

How do the actions of the past continue to influence who we are now?

What can we learn by engaging with some of the personal histories of today's Australians? Indigenous photographer James Henry presents a series of five multi-generational portraits of elders from the Kulin Nations with their descendants, accompanied by recorded interviews considering what it means to be Aboriginal and the legacy of more than 60000 years of human history for First Nations Australians.

Meanwhile South-Sudanese born, Melbourne-based artist Atong Atem recreates photos from her family album as she continues her exploration of migration to Australia from the perspective of the African diaspora.



TOWN HALL PRECINCT

Cindy Sherman (US)

Untitled Film Still

Venue: Atrium, Fed Square (outdoor)

Opening Hours: 24 hrs

Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Still* is presented at an enormous scale during PHOTO 2022, celebrating the artist's iconic status as one of the world's most influential photographers, and introducing her practice to a whole new generation of art audiences.

The image is drawn from a series of performative black and white photographs made by Sherman during the late 1970s in New York. Each image in this series is reminiscent of the kind of publicity shots used to promote films during the 1950s and 1960s. To make the photographs Cindy Sherman carefully transforms her appearance and stages herself in fictitious scenarios in locations across the city. *Untitled Film Still* was taken outdoors and hints at something curious going on, but the full story is left ambiguous, encouraging audiences to interpret what is happening based on their own lived experience.



Questions:

1. Cindy Sherman is interested in depicting female stereotypes. What kind of words would you use to describe the type of woman depicted in *Untitled Film Still*? Do the costume, props and location in the artwork tell us anything about her role in society or profession?
2. How has Cindy Sherman created a feeling of suspense in this artwork?
3. Come up with your own storyline and film title to go with *Untitled Film Still*. Share it with your family or school group.
4. Since she was a child Cindy Sherman has loved to dress up and see what it feels like to be someone else. Create your own character through dressing up and striking a pose inspired by the artist.
5. Do you think the close-up, low camera angle in this artwork influences the way audiences perceive Sherman's protagonist? Do you think you might respond differently if the photograph was taken from above and further away by a drone?

Gillian Wearing (UK)

Editing Life

Venue: ACMI

Opening Hours: Mon – Fri, 12pm – 5pm; Sat – Sun, 10am – 6pm

London-based artist Gillian Wearing makes photographs and videos that explore voyeurism in contemporary society. Her work is inspired by reality TV, documentaries and in particular how people perform an identity as they present themselves to the world. In the exhibition *Editing Life* Wearing turns the camera on herself, asking a group of collaborators to predict how she could look at the age of 70 via artificial intelligence (AI) and age-processing technologies.

Wearing also collaborated with advertising agency Wieden+Kennedy in London to produce a video work where we meet a series of people who appear to look like her. Wearing created a deepfake by mapping an AI digital mask of her face onto others. Using this technology, Wearing asks us to consider how reality can be distorted in the age of selfies and social media.

Questions:

1. The walls of the gallery are covered in multiple versions of Gillian Wearing's possible future self. Which of the portraits of Gillian Wearing at 70 do you think is the most believable? Why?
2. In the video everyone on the screen has Gillian Wearing's face superimposed over their own. Have you seen this kind of deepfake technology anywhere else? Can you think of any positive and negative implications for this kind of identity swapping?
3. Filters on the social media platform Snapchat and other digital imaging software enables users to distort and change their appearance in an instant. Explore some of these technologies to create a range of possible self-portraits.



Matthieu Gafsou (CH)

H+

Venue: St Pauls Cathedral (outdoor)

Opening Hours: 24 hrs

Swiss artist Matthieu Gafsou's series of photographs *H+* represents various ways the human body and intellect can be enhanced through scientific advancement. This concept is called transhumanism and can refer to commonplace items such as the smartphone, orthodontic braces, artificial limbs and pacemakers, through to technological implants and body modifications that are far less familiar to us. The artist set out with an intention to research and map the presence of transhumanist ideas in our lives, visiting institutional laboratories and clinics as well as less orthodox research environments across Europe along the way.

Questions:

1. In one of Matthieu Gafsou's photographs there is a portrait of a heavily made-up woman wearing a respirator. What makes this photographic portrait so evocative and unusual?
2. What is the overall atmosphere in these photographs? How does the artist create this mood?
3. Do any of Gafsou's subjects look directly into the camera lens? How does this affect our relationship with the people represented?
4. *H+* documents transhumanist technology of the present. What do you imagine the future possibilities of transhumanism might be? Draw some ideas for body modifications for people of the future.
5. The myth of the Cyborg is an example of a science-fiction fantasy related to transhumanism. Can you think of any stories you have read or films you have seen which include a cyborg character or explore futuristic themes related to transhumanism? What are they?



Thandiwe Muriu (KE)

Camo 34

Venue: Scott Alley (outdoor)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

This vibrant new artwork by Kenyan artist Thandiwe Muriu celebrates contemporary African womanhood, culture and beauty. Inspired by the flawless aesthetic of fashion magazines and her Kenyan cultural heritage, the artist's model is dressed in traditional patterned textiles sourced from Nairobi's street markets. Striking a pose in front of an identical fabric backdrop, the model is immersed in a kaleidoscope of colour and appears to simultaneously burst forth and disappear before us.



Questions:

1. Thandiwe Muriu is interested in exploring how individuals can lose their identity to culture. How do you think she conveys this idea through her photograph?
2. What kind of visual impact does this artwork have in the public space where it is exhibited? How might you experience the work differently if it were on the cover of a magazine or on the wall of an art gallery?
3. Contemporary artists Thandiwe Muriu, Yinka Shonibare and Atong Atem have each found a creative way to incorporate African textile motifs into their art practice. Do some research and find out how each artist has drawn inspiration and expressed ideas about cultural identity through this vividly coloured fabric.

PARLIAMENT PRECINCT

Annie Wang (TW)

The Mother as a Creator

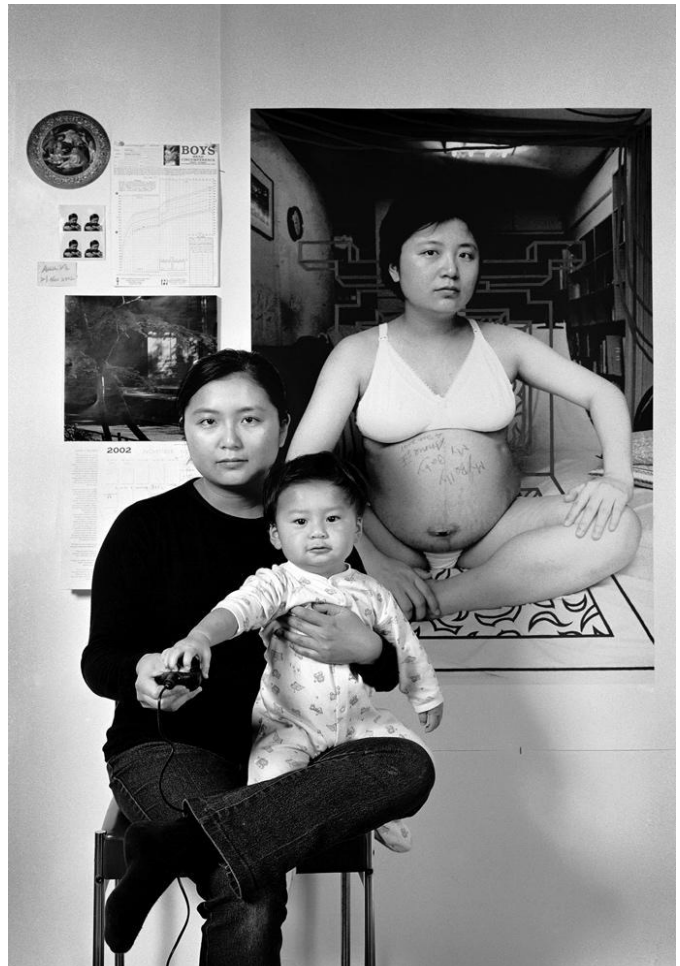
Venue: AC/DC Lane (outdoors)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

In 2001 before her son was born, Taiwanese artist Annie Wang signed and dated her pregnant belly—the way an artist signs a canvas—and made a photographic self-portrait. This image became the first in an ongoing series of black and white photographs of her and her son, exploring the relationship between motherhood and the role of an artist. Over time Wang has regularly created a new double-portrait documenting her son growing towards adulthood. In each photograph, the previous portrait can be seen on the wall behind, a reminder of the time before. Wang's work gives us an intimate insight into her lived experience of motherhood and relationship with her son, whilst actively questioning the idea of motherhood in traditional Taiwanese culture, and its stereotypical associations with self-sacrifice.

Questions:

1. This long-term art project is filled with all kinds of domestic objects and symbols that reflect Annie Wang's family and artistic life. What kind of props has she included in each of the photographs?
2. How would you describe the expression on Annie and her sons faces and their body language throughout the series? What does this say about their relationship? Why do you think the artist chose to represent them in this way?
3. Research some more examples of contemporary female artists who have maintained their artistic freedom while raising a child. Did they experience any challenges along the way?
4. Start your own long-term self-portrait project at home. Think about the kind of props, backgrounds and environments you would like to include in your photographs.



Vasantha Yoganathan (FR)

Afterlife

Venue: Sofitel Melbourne on Collins

Opening hours: Daily, 8am – 6pm

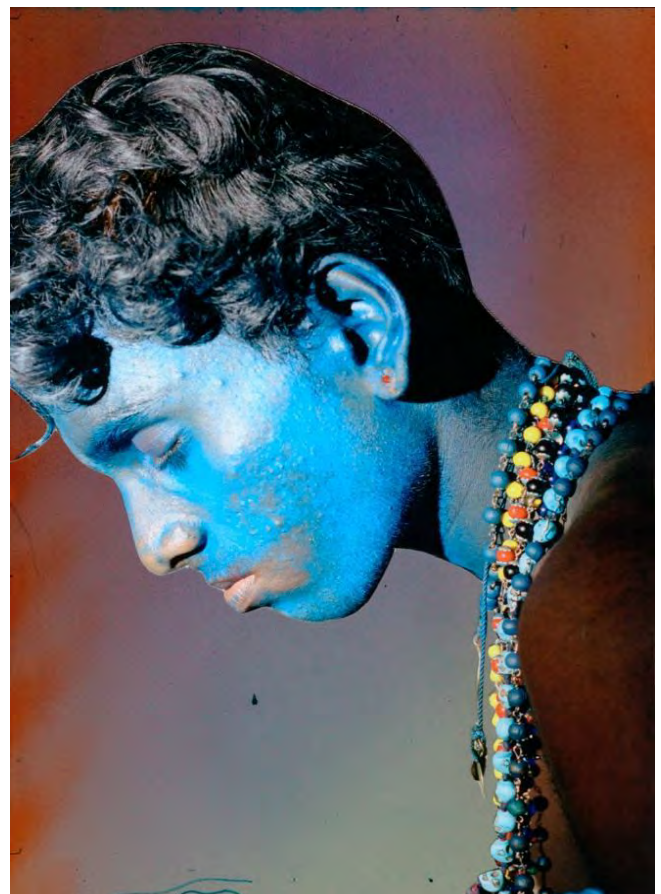
French photographer Vasantha Yoganathan spent seven years travelling to India to create a contemporary retelling of the Indian Sanskrit tale Ramayana through images. Inspired by vivid memories of a comic book version of the story he had seen in his father's house as a child, the artist began thinking about how he could trace this epic mythological tale through the lived experience of contemporary Hindi festivals associated with the Ramayana.

Afterlife is the sixth chapter of the story that the artist has created. The theme of this work is universal, and audiences don't need to be well versed in Indian mythology to relate to the intensity of emotions on display.

Yoganathan's storytelling has a poetic rather than literal quality. To reinterpret the Ramayana through photography Yoganathan takes us to Dussehra, an annual Hindu festival celebrating Prince Rama's victory over evil. The artist uses a combination of documentary photography and collage to construct images of the painted faces and costumes of festival goers and their seemingly otherworldly states of consciousness throughout the night.

Questions:

1. Can you describe the emotions and colours that are on display in these images?
2. Do some research about the Ramayana. When was this story written and for whom? Why does this story and the festivals associated with it continue to be important in current day India for Hindu people?
3. How does the use of flash photography and collage in Yoganathan's images create a sense of drama and theatricality?
4. If you could retell a story that is important to you through photographs, what story would it be?



Richard Kobla Dido (GH)

Men Do Not Cry

Venue: 99 Spring Street (outdoor)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

"I come from a hood where 'men' don't cry. We are praised for holding in the pain and misery. The hood where it is all good and men do not show their emotions."

Ibrahim Intwari

A massive photograph of a group of young men posed together as a human pillar towers over Spring Street, making a powerful statement about male vulnerability and tenderness. Sydney-based, Ghanaian-born artist Richmond Kobla Dido was inspired to make this artwork as a response to Ibrahim Intwari's essay 'Men Do Not Cry' which highlights the negative impacts of masculine stereotypes surrounding men—especially black men—and emotion.

Questions:

1. How important do you think it is for the next generation of young men to feel supported and safe to express their feelings?
2. Why do you think the men in the image are posed with their eyes closed?
3. The grand scale of *Men Do Not Cry* has visual impact and street presence. Find a safe place to spend about ten minutes standing near this photograph. Notice the way that people walking down Spring Street engage with the artwork. What did you observe?
4. Create your own group portrait with some friends inspired by the vertical composition of this image.



James Henry (AU)
Kulin Generations

Venue: Old Treasury Building (outdoors)
Opening hours: 24 hrs

Melbourne-based Indigenous photographer James Henry has been commissioned to make a new series of portraits of five Elders from across the five language groups of the Kulin nation posing with their descendants. N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, Uncle Talgium Edwards, Aunty Fay Carter and Aunty Marlene Gilson have all invited James Henry on Country to create images that celebrate the continuation of family and culture. The portraits are accompanied by recorded interviews considering what it means to be Aboriginal in Australia today and reflecting on the ways in which each family connects across multiple generations.

Questions:

1. *Kulin Generations* explores family connections and intergenerational knowledge sharing between Indigenous Elders and the younger generations within their family. What kind of things can you see happening in each of these images? What do you think the younger generations are learning from the Elders?
2. Spend some time listening to the interview associated with each portrait. How do the audio and visual aspects of this artwork relate to one another?
3. There are five Kulin Nations represented by the Elders in these portraits. Can you connect each Elder with the language groups they represent? Djadjawurung, Taungurong, Wathaurong, Woiworung and Boon Wurrung
4. Do you live on Country that is part of the Kulin Nations?
Do some research to find out who your local Aboriginal Elders are.



Atong Atem (SS)

Surat

Venue: Old Treasury Building (outdoors)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

South Sudanese-born, Melbourne-based artist Atong Atem is known for creating striking photographs that celebrate the personal and collective migrant narratives of the African diaspora through portraiture. Her compositions are drenched with vivid colour, pattern and visual symbols that set the scene for explorations of identity. Each of Atong Atem's subjects is encouraged and empowered to control their own image during the photographic process, choosing their surroundings and the way they dress, pose and perform in front of the camera.

Atem's large-scale installation at PHOTO 2022 draws on images from her new photobook, titled *Surat*. This title means 'Snapshots' in Sudanese-Arabic and brings together restaged and reimagined scenes from her family albums with Atong performing all the roles herself.

Questions:

1. Who are some of the characters that are represented in Atong Atem's family portraits? What can you tell about each of them through looking at the environments, clothing, and facial expressions of each subject?
2. Why do you think Atong Atem decided to reinterpret and restage her own family history for audiences to see?
3. Back at home, restage one of your own family photographs and create a new portrait. Enable the person or people in your photograph to choose where to pose, what to wear and how to perform for the camera.



RIVER PRECINCT

Massimo Vitali (IT)

Leporello 2020

Venue: Southgate

Opening hours: Tue – Fri, 10am – 5pm; Sat – Sun, 10am – 4pm

Acclaimed Italian photographer Massimo Vitali is best known for his large-format panoramic images of people at leisure. He has been documenting the Italian coastline for almost three decades and is interested in how people occupy public space, and the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Vitali's highly detailed crowd scenes seem to echo the complex narratives of epic history paintings, but instead of mythology and religion present us with the unguarded pleasures and social interactions of his fellow Italians at play.

Somewhere between landscape and surveillance, Massimo has developed a photographic style that emphasises the voyeuristic possibilities of the medium. He will often build a temporary platform structure from which to observe his subjects from a distance, carefully choosing the optimum moment during the day to document.



Questions:

1. Many people think that work defines who we are, but Massimo Vitali is more interested in how people spend their leisure time. What can you tell about the people in the photographs from way they are behaving at the beach?
2. The photographs on display in PHOTO 2022 were made by Massimo Vitali as Italians were allowed to return to the beach after being quarantined during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Can you see any details within the images that allude to this moment in time?
3. Do you think the artist is respectful of the individuals he photographs? Do the people in the photographs know they are being observed by the artist? Do you think anyone is performing for the camera?
4. If you were going to document a large group of Australians at leisure, where would you locate yourself, and why?

Aziz Hazara (AF) + Unknown Carpet Makers *I am looking for you like a drone, my love*

Venue: Fiona and Sidney Myer Gallery
Opening hours: Tue – Sat, 12pm – 5pm

Afghanistan-born, Berlin-based artist Aziz Hazara presents an impactful suite of large-scale photographs documenting the piles of detritus left behind by international troops following their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 after two decades of occupation. Images of a landscape subsumed in junk are juxtaposed with beautiful handmade carpets woven by artisans from the region in the galleries.



Questions:

1. Why do you think Aziz Hazara decided to include the carpets in this installation? What do you think they represent?
2. Aziz Hazara is interested in examining the enduring impact and legacy of war in his country of birth. Why are these complex and challenging stories important to share with audiences through art?
3. Who do you think should be responsible for cleaning up the mess that is represented in this exhibition?

Angela Tiatia (NZ/AU)

Holding On

Venue: Buxton Contemporary (Outdoor)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

New Zealand born Sydney-based artist Angela Tiatia's artistic practice is informed by her perspective and experiences as a Samoan woman. Filmed on Tuvalu *Holding On* is a video performance work exploring the threat of sea levels on people in the South Pacific. The artist has created a simple, poetic and powerful response to the climate crisis, lying herself on a concrete slab as the tide gradually comes in. Waves lap relentlessly over her body as she holds on in a valiant attempt not to be swept away.



Questions:

1. Why do you think the artist chose to appear in her own artwork rather than work with an actor to perform in this artwork? What is the significance of her personal presence within the artwork?
2. What do you think the artistic intention of this artwork is?
3. Can you think of any other artists who address contemporary issues in relation to climate change through their artwork?

Naomi Hobson Kaantju/Umpila (AU)

Adolescent Wonderland

Venue: Birrarung Lightboxes, Southbank Promenade (outdoors)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

Kaantju and Umpila artist Naomi Hobson lives and works in her hometown of Coen, a remote community of Far North Queensland. She is inspired by her ongoing connection to Country and the relationships she has with the local people within her community.

Positioned along Southbank Promenade, on the banks of the Birrarung (Yarra River), Hobson presents a series of illuminated photographs on lightboxes that share the parallel lives and stories of Aboriginal teenagers living along the Coen River in Cape York Peninsula. Hobson has applied vivid colour to emphasise the energy of the adolescent subjects in her photographs and celebrate their adventurous, youthful spirits against a black and white background.

Questions:

1. What kind of things are the young people represented in Naomi Hobson's *Adolescent Wonderland* doing? If you were going to be photographed for a portrait, what would you choose to do?
2. How is the waterway of the Coen River represented in the artworks? Why do you think the curators of the PHOTO 2022 festival chose to locate these artworks in proximity to the Birrarung (Yarra River)?
3. Do some more research about Naomi Hobson's artwork in relation to the photo-media practices of some other Australian artists who emphasise colour and hand-colouring practice. For example, artists Michael Cook and Ruth Maddison.
4. Inspired by the practice of Naomi Hobson, experiment with hand-colouring and/or digital image manipulation to create a self-portrait that combines colour and black and white imagery.



The Huxleys (AU)

Venue: Birrarung Lightboxes, Southbank Promenade (outdoors)

Opening hours: 24 hrs

Will and Garrett Huxley are Melbourne-based collaborative performance artists who create projects that epitomise a highly stylised, kitsch, and surrealist aesthetic. They are inspired by the beauty of the natural world to design and make fantastical costumes to appear in as a duo within their work. For PHOTO 2022 the Huxleys have made a spectacular suite of lightboxes commenting about our relationship with the oceans through a glamorous, decorative costumed performance as gender fluid sea creatures.



Questions:

1. The Huxleys love the freedom of wearing a costume and the way that putting one on can simultaneously mask their identity and enable them to transform into glamorous beings ready to escape into another world. What kind of identity are the Huxleys assuming for their PHOTO 2022 exhibition? What materials do you think these costumes are made from?
2. What is the significance of the environment the Huxleys are posing in and the fact that the sea creatures are gender fluid?
3. What do you think the artists are trying to say about identity through their artwork?
4. Make an elaborate costume and create your own performance art inspired by the Huxleys.

STATE LIBRARY PRECINCT

Christian Thompson Bidjara (AU)
Being Human Human Being

Venue: RMIT Alumni Courtyard - Old Melbourne Gaol (outdoor)

Opening hours: Mon – Fri, 7am – 8pm; Sat – Sun, 10am – 5pm

Internationally acclaimed Indigenous artist Christian Thompson AO is a Bidjara man from Barcaldine in central west Queensland. Thompson made history in 2010 when he became the first Aboriginal Australian to attend Oxford University. Throughout his career Christian Thompson has continually maintained a respect for Country and closeness to his Bidjara identity and language. His artworks embody the essence of his culture and lived experiences in the environment.

For PHOTO2022 Christian Thompson presents his entire *Flower Wall* series together for the first time amidst a new photographic commission for the festival: *Being Human, Human Being*. Each frame visualises Thompson staging his own disappearance into a botanical constellation of native and non-native flowers. The photographs are surrounded by a soundscape featuring the artists voice singing in Bidjara, maintaining each word as part of a living language.



Questions:

1. What kind of flowers can you see in *Being Human, Human Being*? Why do you think Christian Thompson opted to feature both native and non-native flowers in this series of artworks?
2. What do you think Christian Thompson is symbolising as he disappears into the wall of flowers?
3. Listen to Christian Thompson singing in Bidjara language while you look at each artwork. How important is the soundtrack to the immersive atmosphere of this installation?
4. Consider Thompson's idea that even if one word of Bidjara language is spoken it remains a living language. Why is it so important to keep Australia's Indigenous languages alive? What part do contemporary artists like Christian Thompson play in preserving language and culture for the next generation?
5. Create and photograph your own composition with natural materials that are accessible to you.

VCE STUDIO ARTS: ART INDUSTRY CONTEXTS CASE STUDY

CHRISTIAN THOMPSON AO: *Being Human Human Being*

INTERVIEW WITH THE CURATOR

The following conversation between Brendan McCleary (Associate Curator, PHOTO 2022) and Melissa Bedford (Educator) has been developed to support VCE Studio Arts students who visit the festival with their school in relation to Unit 4, Outcome 3, Art Industry Contexts. The conversation took place in February 2022.

Q: What are the key ideas and themes that Christian Thompson has based the body of work around? And why are these ideas important for contemporary audiences to engage with?

A: Christian Thompson AO is an Indigenous Australian artist. All of his practice explores ideas of identity, sexuality, race and memory from his perspective. This body of work, his *Flower Walls* series are created as self-portraits, with Christian embedded in a wall of flowers. Body and plants combining, the relationship between the two becomes a symbol for an exploration of identity – how we are defined by our relationship to nature. Reflecting on race and memory, these images are of an Indigenous body surrounded by florals and leaves, showing the connection to the natural world and the Australian landscape.

Q: Describe the process of developing the installation. How long has the project been in the making?

A: This project has been 12 months in the making. The installation was developed by:

- Considering the location and site for the artwork, and how the work will be read in an urban context
- Christian undertaking research in his studio into new ideas for the artwork
- Christian creating the new photographic and sound work in his studio
- All artworks being shared with PHOTO 2022 for printing and production

The process began with conversations between Christian, his gallery 'Sarah Scout Presents' and PHOTO 2022's curatorial team: Elias Redstone (Artistic Director) and Brendan McCleary (Associate Curator). These conversations started with hearing about Christian's current interests and practice, alongside discussing the themes and ideas behind PHOTO 2022.

Each Festival focuses on a central theme, for 2022 this is 'Being Human'. PHOTO 2022 asks what it means to be alive. What is the human experience today? What lived experiences unite us? And what drives us apart? How do ideas of gender, sexuality, race, class and nationality define us? And how is our sense of self evolving, both individually and as a society?

Christian was engaged as a commissioned artist to produce new work within these themes and the ideas his artworks explore. Through conversations with the curators, Christian proposed to create a new artwork and sound work for PHOTO 2022, which would be presented as an immersive installation bringing his *Flower Wall* series all together for the first time.

Q: What kind of photographic prints will audiences encounter outdoors when they visit? Is there a range of digital techniques that have been used to create the artworks?

A: The photographs are made in a studio with additional editing and adding to the photographs using digital techniques and collaging photographs together. For example, in *Being Human Human Being*, the newest work in the series, there are 4 arms in the artwork. Each of these was photographed in a different frame, these images then laid together.

Q: Describe the inclusion of sound in the project? Why is the sound component so crucial to this body of work and Christian Thompson's practice more broadly?

A: The sound component of the installation is incredibly important. All of Christian's sound works are recordings of his own voice, singing in his mother tongue, Bidjara. Historically, Bidjara has been considered an extinct Indigenous language.

The intention behind the sound works is not to teach language, but instead to give people an experience of what Bidjara feels and sounds like, and also to make that part of the larger Australian experience and conversation. Even just one word of Bidjara sung means it cannot be described as extinct or lost because it is being presented as a living language within the art context.

Q: What kind of expertise and support did PHOTO 2022 offer Christian Thompson to help him produce the work? Did the artists collaborate with a curator at the festival to produce the project? What kind of conversations did this involve?

A: Christian Thompson collaborated with PHOTO 2022's Artistic Director Elias Redstone, and Associate Curator Brendan McCleary in the creation and installation of this project. This collaboration started by talking through the new ideas Christian has been exploring, as well as the themes the festival is focusing on: Being Human. Through conversation, the idea to create a new 'Flower Wall' named *Being Human Human Being* to present alongside the existing Flower Walls as an immersive display in the Old Melbourne Gaol courtyard.

PHOTO 2022 team was able to offer instruction in presenting artworks at large scale outdoors. This includes assisting and looking after the building, printing and installing of the artwork.

Q: What are the curatorial intentions for this exhibition? What do you hope to be communicated to audiences?

A: The curatorial intentions of this project are to present an immersive installation that transforms the Old Melbourne Gaol courtyard into a site of regeneration and reflection. As a Bidjara person of the central Queensland desert, Christian Thompson has often drawn a vivid connection to the environment throughout his twenty-year practice. Bringing this aesthetic into an urban environment as a form of regeneration, reflection, and a shifting of cultural thought – a way of using representations of nature and connections to nature to change the way in which we see an urban space. The intention here is to show how even in urban settings, there is a connection to nature and landscape.

Q: What display structures and supports have been used to present the artworks? What are some of the considerations for the presentation and conservation of artwork temporarily displayed outdoors for the festival?

A: The artworks are printed as 3mx3mx3m vinyl banners, stretched across a triangular metal frame. This frame is engineered with weights on the interior to ensure the safety of the artwork in public space. Engineering is incredibly important to consider, to ensure artworks are safe in high winds and other weather. The speaker system for the sound work is also set up using equipment appropriate for weather.

Q: How might the works be experienced differently if they were in a gallery context to outdoors?

A: These artworks in a gallery would normally be framed photographic works, sequentially hung on a wall. Audiences would interact with the works by walking one by one past each of the photographic prints.

In this installation, audiences are presented with the artworks at a human scale, even larger. The artworks reach from the ground to above head height (3m high), becoming photographic towers. This makes the installation much more interactive, with audiences walking in and amongst the photographs. The sound work being hidden within the tower continues this interactive connection, with the sound echoing through the courtyard and carried by the wind.

IMAGE CREDITS

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1. Naomi Hobson, *Fish Boys* (detail), 2022, from the series *Adolescent Wonderland*. Commissioned by Photo Australia for PHOTO 2022 International Festival of Photography. Courtesy the artist.
6. Philip Montgomery, from the series *American Mirror*, 2021. Courtesy the artist and Le Space.
7. Top: Annie Wang, *No.1 The day before I was due to give birth*, 2001, from the series *The Mother as a Creator*, 2001-ongoing. Courtesy the artist.
Bottom: Samuel Hodge, from the series *The Wit of the Staircase* (detail), 2022. Courtesy the artist.
8. Top: Hoda Afshar, from the series *Speak the wind* (detail), 2015–20. Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.
Bottom: Phuong Ngo, *I am the state*, 2022, from the series *Lost and Found*, 2019-ongoing. Courtesy the artist.
9. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still*, 1980. Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth. © Cindy Sherman.
10. Gillian Wearing, *Self Portrait of Me Now in Mask*, 2011. Courtesy Maureen Paley, London. © Gillian Wearing
11. Matthieu Gafsou, from the series *H+* (detail), 2015-18. Courtesy the artist and Galerie C/MAPS.
12. Thandiwe Muriu, *Camo 34* (detail), 2022. Commissioned by Photo Australia and Metro Tunnel Creative Program for PHOTO 2022 International Festival of Photography. Courtesy the artist and 193 Gallery.
13. Annie Wang, *No.2 Pressing the camera shutter together*, 2002, from the series *The Mother as a Creator*, 2001-ongoing. Courtesy the artist.
14. Vasantha Yoganathan, *Rama Praying for Victory*, 2019, from the series *Afterlife*. Courtesy the artist and Jhaveri Contemporary.
15. Richmond Kobla Dido, from the series *Men Don't Cry*, 2021. Courtesy the artist.
16. James Henry, *Aunty Marlene*, from the series *Kulin Generations*, 2022. Commissioned by Photo Australia for PHOTO 2022 International Festival of Photography. Courtesy the artist.
17. Atong Atem, from the series *Surat*, 2022. Commissioned by Photo Australia for PHOTO 2022 International Festival of Photography. Courtesy the artist and MARS Gallery.
18. Massimo Vitali, *Manarola Paranco, August 15th, 2020*, from the series *Leporello 2020*. Courtesy the artist.
19. Aziz Hazara, *I am looking for you like a drone, my love* (detail), 2021. Courtesy the artist.
20. Angela Tiatia, *Holding On* (video still), 2015. Courtesy the artist and Buxton Contemporary.
21. Naomi Hobson, *Fish Boys* (detail), 2022, from the series *Adolescent Wonderland*. Commissioned by Photo Australia for PHOTO 2022 International Festival of Photography. Courtesy the artist.
22. The Huxleys. Courtesy the artists.
23. Christian Thompson AO, *Being Human Human Being*, 2022. Commissioned by Photo Australia for PHOTO 2022 International Festival of Photography. Courtesy the artist, Sarah Scout Presents and Yavuz Gallery.