The City Speaks brings art into the laneways, parks and public spaces of Melbourne's city streets. Through performance, installation and spoken word, participating artists and writers evoke encounter, curiosity and provocation – probing a wide, and at times unsuspecting, audience to rethink the definition of art and consider how it might reflect, enrich, and even alter, urban space and society.

How can art and language combine in unexpected and myriad ways, to cut through the visual noise of urban space and encourage us to see our city through new eyes?

**Education Program Focus Artist:**

**THE SIGN:**

**Marnie Edmiston, Jordan Marani, Steven Rhall, Alex Selenitsch, Hossein Valamanesh**

A0 posters commissioned for the project and distributed widely across the city.

**THE SIGNIFIER:**

**Raquel Ormella**

Text-based banners in three ground-floor windows in the CBD that borrow aesthetically from sporting and protest banners to question the relationship between humans and their surrounding environments.

**THE PERFORMER:**

**Jacqui Shelton**

Jacqui Shelton’s performance work, News of the building of the wall uses Kafka’s short story of the same name as a starting point for an investigation into the intimate and physical ways in which we communicate. More an encounter than an artwork, the work can only be accessed through a one-on-one encounter with the artist and the willing engagement of the participant.

**THE PEDESTRIANS:**

**Sophie Cunningham, Christos Tsiolkas and Alia Gabres**

Walking tours of the city by artists and writers on weekends of 12/13 and 19/20 November, 3–4 pm

**THE RESPONSE:**

**Romy Ash**

Melbourne-based writer Romy Ash will write a response to Jacqui Shelton’s performance News of the building of the wall to be published on the ACCA website.

**EPILOGUE**

**Danae Valenza**

Like lost children we live our unfinished adventures consists of an installation of eight neon sculptures that transcribes the title of the work in shorthand text. The movement and proximity of people passing by these sculptures will prompt a burst of light and sound – with each neon paired to a different instrument.
MARNIE EDMISTON
Find your endless encounter 2016

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• Why do you think Edmistion has chosen to express herself via the written or visual language of the diagrammatic?
• What effect does Edmistion achieve by subverting the diagram - something that usually explains the clearest, most correct way to proceed - by depicting an illogical space?

JORDAN MARANI
NO’2016

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• By isolating this one very common word by itself Marani turns ‘no’ into an singular object. At what, or to whom, do you think the ‘no’ is directed? Is it an answer, and if so, what, what about?

STEVEN RHALL
Narm Melbourne Corp 2016

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• What does it mean to express the issue of Indigenous sovereignty and land rights through a humorous artwork?
• Does it heighten or lessen the work’s impact?
• Does the fact that Rhal’s poster blends-in with the other advertising billboards at Flinders Lane, AC DC Lane, RMIT University, A’Beckett St, Flinders St, Wellington Pde, Swanston St, Elizabeth St, Market St, Franklin St, La Trobe St, Queen Victoria Markets, Bourke St, Queen St, Tattersalls Lane, Jones Lane around the city - but would also be subtly subversive or poetic within their content, so as to be distinct from advertising.

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ALEX SELENITSCH
FORMelbourne 2016

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• Many stories contain events where something or someone appears (or forms), and also of travel from one place to another. Do you think that this work is a kind of ultra-simplified story? If so, what happens next?
• What other pairings of similarly spelled words could you use to make your own version of Selenitsch’s artwork?

HOSSEIN VALAMANESH
Hasti masti! 2016

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• The brief was that each poster should relate in some way to Melbourne specifically, or to the idea of a city in the broader conceptual sense. The guiding idea was that the works would reflect existing forms of poster design and public address as are seen on walls around the city – but would also be subtly subversive or poetic within their content, so as to be distinct from advertising.

THE SIGNIFIER: RAQUEL ORMELLA
LOCATIONS:
Alpha60, 195 Flinders Lane
116 Lonsdale Street
Herbert and Mason, 10 Crossley St

Sydney-based artist Raquel Ormella works at the intersections of art and activism. For the past ten years, Ormella has been constructing flags and banners that aesthetically borrow from sporting and protest banners, referencing them in her practice to comment on political events and social situations. For The City Speaks a series of Ormella’s banners adorn the shop-fronts of Melbourne, boutiques, bars and bookshops – enticing passersby with their eye-catching designs and encouraging critical reflection about their own relationship to their urban surrounds. The distribution of banners across the city is intended to allow for conversation to develop between the artworks and across sites, rewarding both the accidental and intentional viewer.

PROBLEMATIC FRAGMENTS 2015
In this work Ormella has pierced, cut and reconfigured an Australian flag. Ormella has used the flag repeatedly throughout her practice as a way of constructing critique of the Australian nation and our self-image. The phrase “problematic fragments” emerges out of the dissected and pierced fabric - flipped, rearranged and made delicate and precarious. This new flag perhaps guides the viewer to consider the metaphorical fabric of Australian society as both problematic and fragmented, consisting of many groups that are perhaps not equally or fairly represented in the present day.

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• How do you feel and what do you think about the Australian flag? Does it adequately represent the Australia that you know and experience day-to-day?

WORKERS BLUES 2016
In this banner Ormella has sourced the readymade materials of hi-vis fabric and workers uniforms - commonly seen on Australian mining and construction sites. From these materials Ormella has created an assemblage depicting select areas of the Australian continent, with Victoria, Tasmania, northern-west Australia and Darwin highlighted in orange. The words “fly in fly out”, commonly abbreviated to the acronym ‘FIFO’, refer to workers who fly from where they live to another area to work for months at a time. In this case referring to the mines in West Australia and the Northern Territory that employ FIFO workers from all over the country.

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• Do you think Ormella is expressing positive, negative, or neutral feelings about this particular working culture in Australia? Why?
• Why do you think Ormella has used actual clothing to create this artwork? Do you think it would be more or less effective and engaging if she had, for instance, painted the work instead? And why?
• Why do you think this artwork is titled Workers blues?

NEW FLAG 2012
In New Flag Ormella has appropriated another flag, this time a standard promotional item. In this instance the phrase “mining boom”, a reference to the explosion of mining related activity and wealth in parts of Australia, is juxtaposed by cutting into the printed text “ flee market”. The seven and five-pointed stars familiar to us from the Australian flag also give this artwork a specific national context. One could view this artwork as a biting allegorical commentary on the recent economic downturn in Western Australia, where the mining industry is winding down and, subsequently as wealth flow decreases and mining workers seek to relocate, land and items of property are being sold-off at drastically reduced ‘flea market’ prices.

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• What point do you think Ormella is trying to make with this work, if any, and why?

EPICLOGUE:
DANAE VALENZA
Like lost children we live our unfinished adventures

LOCATION:
Laneway at 185 Flinders Lane (between Anna Schwartz Gallery and the Adelphi Hotel)

Like lost children we live our unfinished adventures consists of an installation of eight neon sculptures that spell out the title of the work in shorthand text. The movement and proximity of people passing by these sculptures will prompt a burst of light and sound – with each neon paired to a different instrument. Valenza has explored the connection between music and visual art in several of her artworks. When a viewer walks past this artwork specific musical sounds are triggered. In this way the viewer the opportunity to actively play the work by moving their bodies to different spots in front of the work.

Shorthand is a method of writing quickly by using symbols or abbreviations for sounds, words, or phrases that allows dialogue to be transcribed into text as fast as it is spoken. People who practice shorthand are called stenographers and traditionally they would work in places such as courtrooms where it is essential that exchanges be recorded with total accuracy. Shorthand is a typically intermediary form, meant for translation to full words later on. Since Dictaphones became available, and recently recording devices have become ubiquitous, many people can record a conversation just by using their phone, leaving shorthand somewhat outmoded and obsolete.

ON-SITE DISCUSSION:
• Why do you think Valenza has chosen to use an almost obsolete form of writing to communicate the text of her work?
• Do you think the artist is concerned with only reaching the market’ prices.
• Did you realise that you were looking at language when you first saw this work?
• To people who do not recognise shorthand the characters are like abstract artistic gestures and so, in a sense, the message is hidden in plain sight. Why do you think Valenza might be interested in this contradictory quality?
The City Speaks brings art into the laneways, parks and public spaces of Melbourne’s city streets. Through performance, installation and spoken word, participating artists and writers evoke encounter, curiosity and provocation – prompting a wide, and at times unsuspecting, audience to rethink the definition of art and to evoke encounter, curiosity and provocation – speaking of work by only removing and/or rearranging elements from the page of news items.

Valenza’s artwork utilises a sophisticated system of sensors and electronics to allow passers-by in the street to trigger the lights and sounds that make up her work. For this activity you are going to create your own human version of this artwork with a small group of your classmates.

• Divide into a group of 5-7 students.
• As a group decide on a short sentence or fragment of a sentence that you would like to communicate in your artwork - it could be a question, a statement, or a line from a favourite song or poem.
• Choose a language or code that you would like to translate your text into - your translation can be imaginative - you will choose which symbols represent different words, like you are creating your own version of shorthand. Options include musical notation; Morse code; chemical symbols; emojis.
• Draw each symbol on a separate piece of A3 paper - you might like to select different colours as well.
• Assign a different sound to each word/symbol pair. You could use musical instruments; pre-recorded digital sounds; sounds made by everyday objects (like a pen clicking, or a teaspoon tapping against a cup).
• Assign one person to one or two word/symbol/sound combinations and situate yourselves in different parts of the classroom or schoolyard.
• Invite viewers to your interactive artwork! Just like Valenza’s artwork, when a person walks in close proximity to your spot the noise that is assigned to your symbol. As viewers move around the space a sonic performance will take shape.
• Discuss as a class how each project was received.

Reflection:

• Did viewers ‘play’ the work by interacting?
• What kind of reactions and responses did your audience exhibit?
• How did the translation into sound and symbol add to, or detract from, the meaning of your text?
• Is it necessary to literally ‘understand’ a language in order to develop an idea of the artist’s intent?
• Do you understand sound on an intellectual or emotional level? Get a show of hands for each option and discuss.

The Signifier: Raquel Ormella

Locations:
Alpha60, 195 Flinders Lane
116 Lonsdale Street
Herbert and Mason, 10 Crossley St

Back at School:

• Using a full sheet page from a newspaper create your own political artwork using text as your material and scissors or a stanley knife as your tools. It is your task to create a new message by only removing and/or rearranging elements from the page of news items.
• Pick one of the articles on your page in which you are interested. Think of a point of view that you would express if you were having a discussion or debate about that particular issue.
• Write down two or three comments that you would make relating to your point of view in your visual diary. Then, looking at these phrases pick keywords that encapsulate your opinion and incorporate these into your sheet.
• Try to balance the content of the newspaper with the letters that you cut out so that there is a tension between what is originally printed and what you add to the page - this attention of balance between the original material and the cut-out words is what gives Ormella’s works power. You should aim for a similar power in your artwork.
• Once finished hang your works around the school or classroom like political banners, both inside and out if possible.

Reflection:

• Do you think your finished artwork conveyed a message? If so, what?
• Whole class question: Do you prefer artworks that link to larger issues within society, such as Ormella’s and your own, or do you prefer a more formalist approach (concerning composition and aesthetics - the elements and principles)? If yes, why? If no, why? Hold a min-round table discussion to get everyone’s point of view.
• If you made another similar artwork but not in newspaper, what other materials might be interesting to incorporate? Make a list and add short annotations with your reasons for considering each material in your visual diary.

The Sign: Marnie Edmiston, Jordan Marani, Steven Rhall, Alex Selenitsch, Hossein Valamanesh

Locations:
Advertising billboards at Flinders Lane, AC DC Lane, RMIT University, A’Beckett St, Flinders St, Wellington Pde, Swanston St, Elizabeth St, Market St, Franklin St, La Trobe St, Queen Vic Markets, Bourke St, Queen St, Tattersall St, Jones Lane

Back at School:

The approaches taken by these five artists resulted in five very different poster artworks - despite the fact that each artist was given exactly the same brief when they were invited to make an artwork for this project. When you look at the project as a whole you get a sense of diversity between ways of thinking and making in visual language.

• For this task choose one of the artists and adopt the method that they used to create their poster artwork. You are not aiming to create a poster that looks the same, but to work within that artist’s set of ‘rules’ to create a poster that reflects your personality, biography or interests.
• Your posters will be intended for public display so this could be an opportunity to explore what you might like to communicate to the wider public. What do you care about? It could be personal; mysterious; issues-based; factual or fantastical!
• Brainstorm five ideas - no wrong answers - consider everything that pops into your head.
• Decide on your media. Will you use paint, collage, text, digital or photography? Make sure to use paper no larger than A3 so that it can be multiplied as a poster using the photocopier.
• Try five trial designs. Tweak colour schemes, text, scale and number of separate elements together.
• Choose your best idea, media and trial design.
• Create your poster and with help have 5 copies made to put up either around your school or home.

Reflection:

• Try to catch a passerby and interview them about your poster. Ask them what they think of the work, what do they think it means, who they think did it - don’t give them any hints or own up it was you until the end!
• What was it like trying to conceive a public artwork? When you work in shared space it is important to be sensitive to others in that space, did those considerations affect your choices?
• Gather a collection of the class’ posters. What diversity is apparent? How did people address the task differently? As a group discuss what you think worked best.