

Shannon Novak

Make Visible: All Welcome

Shannon Novak believes that we can work together to create a world where people can be themselves, dress how they want to dress and love who they want to love without fear of judgment. Shannon is passionate about creating safe spaces that acknowledge, celebrate and support diversity. Diversity includes but is not limited to gender identity, gender expression, physical appearance, age, ability, race, ethnicity and religion.

The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art shares Shannon's vision and strives to make all visitors feel welcome in our on-site and online spaces.

Make sure you see Shannon's artwork in the River Room on Level 1, GOMA.

Shannon Novak

Make Visible: Celebrate You

Flags often represent groups of people that are united by a shared history, culture or place. For example, the Rainbow flag or 'Pride' flag has become widely recognised as a symbol for the LGBTQI+ community since its creation in 1978. For APT10 Kids, Shannon Novak invites visitors to explore who they are and what is important to them by creating their own flags.

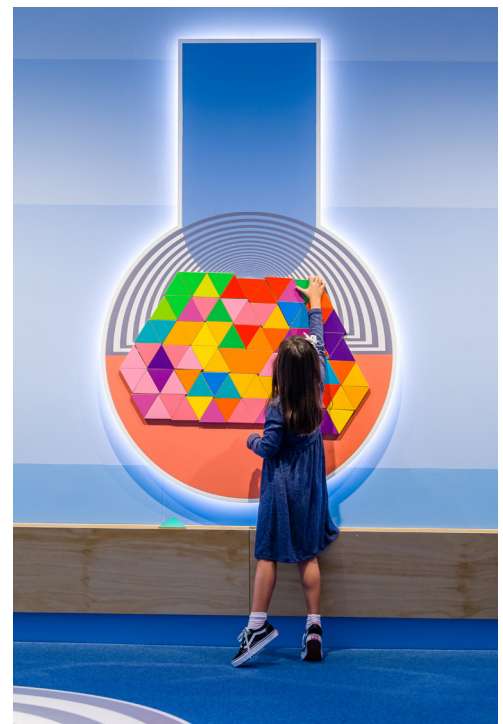
Create a flag design that represents you and what makes you happy, in this multimedia activity.



**Syagini Ratna Wulan,
Shannon Novak and Phuong Ngo**

For APT10, the lower level of GOMA's Children's Art Centre draws together the projects of Syagini Ratna Wulan, Shannon Novak and Phuong Ngo, artists who each invite young audiences to experience the transformative potential of art through shared participation. They encourage children to engage with colour — the meaning that can be attributed to it and the physical response it can elicit. In three quite different ways, the artists each create space for us to embrace a state of empathy, for ourselves and for each other.

Syagini Ratna Wulan's installation features geometric metal panels that children can build upon to create mandalas using magnetised wooden triangles painted in subtle gradations of colour. She hopes to 'invoke in the audience a sense of curiosity'.¹ Ratna Wulan believes the meditative act of moving the triangles around to find an aesthetically pleasing configuration will have a calming, healing effect at a subconscious level and that, through this activity, children and their families might experience a sense of belonging or participation in a greater narrative. Ratna Wulan believes that 'colour brings happiness, and the spectrum of colour brings forth the notion of individuality that can also be communicated universally'.²



Syagini Ratna Wulan
Monad (installation views, GOMA, 2021) / Commissioned for APT10 Kids with support from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation / Courtesy: The artist / Photographs: Josef Ruckli

Shannon Novak shares this interest in the idea of a colour spectrum, with blurred boundaries representing a multitude of possibilities. He creates art 'with a view to growing and supporting community that values people for who they are'.³ He is particularly interested in creating art that inspires positive social change for the LGBTQI+ community. He believes that children often exist in a vibrant and diversely coloured world — then this world is sapped of colour over time. For APT10 Kids, Novak has created an immersive, brightly coloured installation that encourages visitors to embrace leaving the world outside behind, for a moment, to be part of a world that accepts you for you!⁴ This is complemented and contextualised by a video work in which local children share their thoughts on diversity, love and feeling safe — a powerful addition to the space that might serve to remind children and families that they are not alone. Novak's project also features a multimedia interactive in which children can create a flag that represents them and what makes them happy.



Shannon Novak
Make Visible: All Welcome (installation views, GOMA, 2021) / Commissioned for APT10 Kids with support from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation / Courtesy: The artist / Photographs: Josef Ruckli and Chloë Callistemon



Phuong Ngo
Pattern Exchange (installation views, GOMA, 2021) / Commissioned
 for APT10 Kids with support from the Tim Fairfax Family Foundation /
 Courtesy: The artist / Photographs: Josef Ruckli

Phuong Ngo is interested in 'history, memory and place, and how they intersect ... to complicate how we understand who we are and how we have come into being'.⁵ The artist explores themes of identity and racial stereotypes through colour and pattern, and through the way 'problematic language is used in common places', such as the seemingly innocuous naming of house paint. The space features wall, table and floor graphics that respond to the history of cement tiles as colonial artefacts, with a colour palette drawing on the 'Oriental' colour range offered by a well-known paint brand. Children can create their own collage using a piece of paper in a colour based on the brand's 'true blue' shade and additional swatches of paper selected from the 'Oriental' colours. Ngo hopes that children will 'leave the project with more questions than they came in with ... questioning the language that they use and that is used around them'.⁶

Like Ngo, who urges us to consider the impact of language, Novak reminds children of the power of making people feel welcome and safe to be themselves. Ratna Wulan's hope for her project might sum up the aspirations of each of the three artists: to create 'a positive space for [all] people to come together'.⁷

Tamsin Cull

Endnotes

- 1 Syagini Ratna Wulan, email to the author, April 2021.
- 2 Ratna Wulan.
- 3 Shannon Novak, email to the author, March 2021.
- 4 Novak.
- 5 Phuong Ngo, email to the author, March 2021.
- 6 Ngo.
- 7 Ratna Wulan.