

Berninneit Art Gallery 2026 Program



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Visual Art Program for Schools

We are pleased to invite schools and educators to engage with Berninneit Art Gallery and our exciting program of exhibitions, public art and visiting artists. We offer free, fun and thought-provoking learning opportunities for all levels of learners, F-10, VCE, as well as continuing education and special interest groups.

Bringing your class to Berninneit will introduce your students to a dynamic, award-winning arts and cultural venue. Launched in November 2023, Berninneit Art Gallery is programmed with a mix of solo and curated group exhibitions, featuring local and national artists. Exhibitions change every 6-7 weeks, and you are welcome to visit as often as you like!

It is easy to book a class excursion to Berninneit, simply fill in this [Booking form](#).

We can tailor your visit to include:

- An introduction/Q&A with the Art Gallery curator
- Combine with a visit to Myli Library or the Museum
- Use of our community rooms for your group to work on activities or eat lunch
- Resources to support a self-guided visit

If you would like to learn more about any of our programs, visiting artists, or discuss ways your school can get involved beyond an excursion, please contact:

Rosemary Forde
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(03) 5671 2211

Key Dates

Berninneit Art Gallery:

Ellen Taylor
7 February - 22 March 2026

Gonzalo Varela
28 March - 17 May 2026

Helen Tiernan
23 May - 12 July 2026

Benjamin Woods
18 July - 30 August 2026

Hoa Nguyen
5 September - 18 October 2026

Curated Group Show
24 October - 13 December 2026

PICES Summer Exhibition
18 December 2026 - 31 January 2027

Please note: This program preview is provided to assist educators with their forward planning. Dates and details may be subject to change. You can stay updated via our website and mailing list:

<https://www.basscoastculturalvenues.com/>



Image, previous page: PICES Summer Exhibitions, 2025. Photo: Karli Duckett.

Artist: Ellen Taylor

Exhibition dates: 7 February - 22 March 2026

Berninneit Art Gallery



Artist Ellen Taylor grew up making and creating in the coastal town of Inverloch, her practice now encompasses large scale drawings and plant-based installations. Her works are imbued with the obsessiveness and compulsivity of an artist who loves to make with her hands, whether this be hours of layered black crosshatching or the gathering and arrangement of thousands of grasses, leaves and flowers. The work is part of the work.

Ellen completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts, majoring in Sculpture and Spatial Practice, at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2008. In the years following, she has exhibited in various group and solo exhibitions throughout Melbourne and South Gippsland, where she currently works and lives.

<https://www.ellentaylor.com.au>

Image credits: Ellen Taylor, *Field*, 2026.
Photo: Karli Duckett.

For her exhibition at Berninneit, Ellen will use locally sourced, semi-dried flowers, grasses and plant materials. Using the length and height of the gallery space, Ellen's foliage installation will create a serene devotional space.

Ellen first began making large floral displays in her artwork after her mother passed away. She reflects on this, saying: "The harvesting and collection of the plants was a labour of love and act of dedication for me. This story will always be woven into my foliage works, as an everlasting thread and a memorial to her."

Key themes and concepts:

- Installation art
- Nature-based art
- Ephemeral art
- Symbolism and history of flowers and plants, cultural and ritual
- Beauty and decay

Artist: Gonzalo Varela

Exhibition dates: 28 March - 17 May 2026

Berninneit Art Gallery



Artist Gonzalo Varela was born in Argentina, where he studied art at the University of La Plata, where he later went on to teach. He then worked in Barcelona for ten years with a collective art studio, before arriving in Melbourne in 2009 where he founded the Magic Lantern Studio with artist Lucy Parkinson. Gonzalo is now settled in Fish Creek, South Gippsland, where he has lived since 2019.

Gonzalo's exhibition will present a body of work titled 'The Second Horizon'. His paintings in oil, acrylic, and mixed media, imagine future worlds built on the ruins of past societies. Inspired by emerging AI evolutions, these sci-fi civilisations flip the hierarchy between humanity and machines.

Image credits, L-R:

The Lighthouse, oil on canvas, 80 x 80cm.

The breath of the machines, mixed media 40 x 30cm.

Approaching painting as part of storytelling and a slow creative process, Gonzalo says, "I start from chaos and confusion in search of light and poetry. I believe humanity is lost only to find itself again."

www.gonzalovarela.au

Events:

- Exhibition opening: Saturday 28 March, 4pm
- "Happy Accidents" painting workshop: 11 April, 10am-1pm

Key themes and concepts:

- Contemporary painting
- Impact of technology on social, cultural, and environmental life
- "Glitch aesthetics" and digital erosion
- The Anthropocene and imagining post-Anthropocene worlds
- Science fiction, dystopian and utopian imagery

Artist: Helen Tiernan

Exhibition dates: 23 May - 12 July 2026

Berninneit Art Gallery



Born in Gippsland, Helen Tiernan is an artist of Aboriginal and Irish descent, living in Fish Creek. She studied visual art at the Australian National University (ANU) Canberra School of Art, graduating with Honours in 2001 with a major in painting. She was awarded the Aboriginal Artist of the Year, Canberra & District NAIDOC Award in 2004. She has exhibited throughout Australia, and her work is in collections including the National Maritime Museum, Parliament House and the National Museum of Australia.

Her technically stunning paintings combine landscape, songlines, exploration, European and Indigenous history, creating rich cross-cultural narratives.

<https://www.helenstiernan.com/>
<https://www.diggins.com.au/artist/helen-stiernan/>

Image credit: Helen Tiernan in her studio, September 2025.

Helen's exhibition at Berninneit will include her new paintings of Sea Country, masterfully depicting whales in the ocean, and abstract representations of sound pollution. Alongside these works, the exhibition features some of her breakthrough 'Songlines' paintings from 2004, which depicted her research into life for women in historic Aboriginal missions in East Gippsland.

Events:

- Artist Conversation: Saturday 13 June
- This exhibition coincides with NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Day, and Island Whale Festival.

Key themes and concepts:

- Contemporary painting
- Aboriginal art and culture (South-east Australia, Kulin nations)
- History through visual art and storytelling
- Caring for Country - land, sea, and sky
- Memory and archives

Artist: Benjamin Woods

Exhibition dates: 18 July - 30 August 2026

Berninneit Art Gallery



Benjamin Woods is an interdisciplinary artist based in Naarm Melbourne. He has an improvisational practice that encompasses sound, sculpture, and writing. Ben studied at Victorian College of the Arts and later completed a PhD in Fine Art at Monash University, where he is now a Lecturer.

Alongside his own art practice, Ben is co-director of Run Artist Run, an artist-led studio residency space in Docklands. Ben has presented his work at alternative spaces and galleries including: Conduction, Alta Forma, Liquid Architecture, West Space, Incinerator Gallery, and Grafton Regional Gallery.

<https://benjaminwoods.net/>
<https://www.instagram.com/run.artistrun/>

Images:

Left: *Wind Throb*, workshop at Conduction, Footscray, 2025.

Right: Extended ceramic ocarinas, 2025.

Ben's exhibition for Berninneit is titled 'Sound score for the sandy ghost shrimp', and is inspired by the burrows of the Sandy Ghost Shrimp. The shrimp create branching underground channels and delicate spatial nodes, which have inspired Ben to create a series of ceramic and blown glass flutes based on the shapes of these burrows. He then performs melodies using these flutes - creating a vocalisation of these unseen shrimp architectures.

Key themes and concepts:

- Sound and instrument building
- Ceramics and craft practices
- Collaboration
- Ecology and art, place-based materials
- Benthic: the lowest level of a body of water, such as the habitat at the bottom of the ocean; the term comes from the Ancient Greek *benthos* meaning 'the depths'

Artist: Hoa Nguyen

Exhibition dates: 5 September - 18 October 2026

Berninneit Art Gallery



Hoa Nguyen is a Vietnamese-Australian artist living in Southeast Melbourne. Hoa's art practice is informed by her work and beliefs as an activist and ecofeminist. She studied art at Hanoi Fine Arts University, and in St Petersburg at the Repin Institute of Arts, before emigrating to Australia where she has completed a Master of Contemporary Art at the Victorian College of the Arts. Hoa was founder and leader of 'HanoiLink', an underground art collective in Vietnam, from 2006 to 2012.

Hoa's work explores what it means to be human in a complex and changing world of migration and transformation. She has made conceptual artworks, video, installation, and more recently drawing.

<https://www.lemaleme.art/>

Image credit: Forest drawings, VCA University of Melbourne, 2024.

Hoa will exhibit 'Being and Forest' at Berninneit, a series of forest drawings made with Indian ink on long rolls of Tyvek paper. This approach to drawing combines Hoa's experimental process and materials, with an ancient visual art form. The large scale of the multiple forest drawings in the gallery will reflect the immersive majesty of forests.

Hoa says, "As an artist and human rights activist focused on environmental issues in the Asia-Pacific region, I have consistently explored ways to reflect on our planet's natural environment and the rights of nature through my art."

Key themes and concepts:

- Drawing - contemporary and traditional methods
- Forest conservation
- Art and protest
- Ecofeminism: a branch of feminism that explores the connections between gender equality and environmental concerns

Group Exhibition

Exhibition dates: 24 October - 13 December 2026

Berninneit Art Gallery



Details and exhibition title TBD.

This group exhibition curated by Rosemary Forde, will bring together local and Australian contemporary artists who work with birds as subject matter and inspiration. This exhibition will celebrate the unique and ever present bird life of Phillip Island and the Bass Coast region, extending to research around the history of birds on this continent and human interaction with them.

Birds hold significant mythical status in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and for many cultures around the world. Artists have long had a fascination with depicting birds for their beauty and symbolism. The exhibition also connects to the ongoing importance birds have in our local economy, and the conservation challenges for native species.

Image credits:

L: Fernando do Campo, *Late night at the Mitchell with companions*, 2022.

R: Lionel Linday, *White Stork*, 1925.



The exhibition will also include works from the Bass Coast Shire Art Collection.

In the 2014 book *Where Song Began: Australia's birds and how they changed the world*, Tim Low talks about the unique characteristics of Australian birds, including that "Australia was the first home of the world's songbirds".

Key themes and concepts:

- The cultural significance of birds in First Nations creation stories
- Art and ecology
- Local native and migratory bird species, conservation projects

PICES Summer Exhibitions

Exhibition dates: 18 December 2026 - 31 January 2027

Berninneit Art Gallery



Phillip Island Contemporary Exhibition Space Inc (PICES) is not-for-profit community organisation established in 2019. It relies on volunteers to passionately support artists from Bass Coast and beyond and bring quality contemporary art to the community. Since 2023 PICES has partnered with Bass Coast Shire to present a variety of community-run exhibitions at Berninneit Art Gallery.

Berninneit Art Gallery is pleased to partner with PICES to present this annual community-run exhibition. The PICES Summer Exhibitions celebrate creativity and connection through a vibrant showcase of contemporary art from Phillip Island, Gippsland, and beyond. Spanning three fortnightly exhibitions, the season offers an exciting display of artwork in a variety of media presented by dozens of emerging and established artists.

www.pices.com.au

With over 5,000 practicing artists throughout the Gippsland region including over 400 on Phillip Island alone, PICES aim to actively develop new, innovative opportunities for both artists and the viewing public.

Key themes and concepts:

- Art and community partnerships
- Traditional media including painting, sculpture, photography, mixed media
- Defining and blurring the categories of art, craft, and design
- Local and regional artists
- Artistic inspiration and professional practice

Image credit: PICES Summer Exhibitions, 'Artists Insights' panel discussion, 2025.
Photo: Karli Duckett.

Maree Clarke, *Yawa (Long Journey)*

Bass Coast Shire Council Public Art Commission, 2025

Permanent artwork in the Grand Hall, Berninnet



Permanently displayed in the Grand Hall at Berninnet, *Yawa (Long Journey)* consists of thirty Murrini glass panels, shaped and suspended to form a stunning glass canoe overhead. Patination on the glass captures the microscopic elements of the river reed and reflects the play of light and colour of the wetlands and ocean that surround Millowl, Phillip Island. The canoe references the long connection to waterways and history of travel to the island by First Nations people.

Over 300 community members contributed to the creation of these patterns in glass, during public workshops led by Maree Clarke and three generations of her family, Kerri Clarke, Wade Mahoney, Mitch Mahoney, Molly Mahoney and baby Yarran Clarke-Mahoney, in January and February 2025. The panels created in these community workshops were then sent to Canberra where they were fused and fabricated into their final form by Canberra Glassworks.

This short video shows the behind-the-scenes making of *Yawa (Long Journey)*: [Video link](#)

Maree Clarke is a Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba, Mutti Mutti and Boon Wurrung artist. She is a pivotal figure in the reclamation of southeast Australian Aboriginal art practices, reviving elements of Aboriginal culture that were lost - or laying dormant - over the period of colonisation. Maree is known for her open and collaborative approach to cultural practice.

Key themes and concepts:

- Aboriginal art and cultural practices
- Public art and community collaboration
- First Nations history of canoe building and journeying in Bass Coast and surrounds
- Murrini glass and glass art techniques
- Symbolic use of river reeds
- Art as part of cultural revival and education

Image credit: *Yawa (Long Journey)*, glass, stainless steel wire, powder-coated steel. 500 x 56.5 x 29 cm. Photo: Victor Viveaux