

Ken Done
PAINTINGS
YOU PROBABLY
Haven't
seen

CASULA
POWERHOUSE
ARTS CENTRE

EDUCATION KIT

CASULA POWERHOUSE ARTS CENTRE

1 Powerhouse Rd,
Casula NSW 2170
(enter via Shepherd St,
Liverpool)

Tel 02 8711 7123

reception@
casulapowerhouse.com
casulapowerhouse.com

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This Education Kit has been prepared by the Public Programs and Education Team.

Written by Florence Araniego

Director: Craig Donarski

Assistant Director: Nikita Karvounis

Producer of Public Programs: Cayn Rosmarin

Public Programs & Education Officer: Di McClaughlin

Educators: Simon Wheeldon, Hanne Davies, Florence Araniego

Curatorial Team: Jenny Cheeseman, Luke Létourneau, Ellen Hewitt

Marketing Team: Boden Evans, Cara Lopez

Registration Team: Megan Hillyer, Caitlin McCormack

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ABOUT THIS EDUCATION KIT



Indian Summer, 2011, oil and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 102cm

Art is something that makes you *think* and *feel*.

Art also tells a story - from the artist, to the viewer, which is you and me. We are here to discover stories from artworks shown in this exhibition, *Paintings You Probably Haven't Seen: Selected Works 2000 - 2020*. What matters about art is what makes it matter to you. It might be the bright yellows that remind you of the beach - the warm sand at your feet as you run toward the waves. Or the soft greys during a rainy day. Whether it's the colour and composition of painting; or its underlying content, art can be interesting for infinite reasons and none of them are wrong.

Based on research and our own interpretation, this Education Kit aims to give you insight into some of the stories found in these artworks. The artworks in this Education Kit were selected to introduce you to some of Ken Done's paintings and artworks that may not have seen before.

We would like to acknowledge the Cabrogal Clan of the Darug Nation who are the traditional custodians of the land that now resides within Liverpool City Council's boundaries. We acknowledge that this land was also accessed by peoples of the Dhurawal and Darug Nations.

GLOSSARY

ABSTRACT

Existing as an idea, feeling, or quality, not as a material object.

CONVEY

To express a thought, feeling, or idea so that it is understood by other people.

DOMINATES

To be the largest, most important, or most noticeable part of something.

FAUVIST (FAUVISM)

The name applied to the work produced by a group of artists from around 1905 to 1910 (which included Henri Matisse and André Derain) which is characterised by strong colours and fierce brushwork.

FORESHORTENED

Drawn, painted or photographed to appear smaller and closer together.

FRAGMENTS

A small piece or a part, especially when broken from something whole.

HALO

A ring of light around the head of a holy person in a religious drawing or painting.

IDENTITY

Who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others.

IMMORTALISE

To make someone or something so famous that that person or thing is remembered for a very long time.

MANIFEST

To show something clearly, through signs or actions.

MONOCHROMATIC

Using only black, white or grey, or using only one colour.

MOOD

The way you feel at a particular time.

MUSE

A person, or an imaginary being or force that gives someone ideas and helps them to write, paint, or make music.

NOSTALGIC

Feeling happy and also slightly sad when you think about things that happened in the past.

OBSERVE

To watch carefully the way something happens or the way someone does something, especially in order to learn more about it.

OPTIMISITIC

Hoping or believing that good things will happen in the future.

PERSPECTIVE

The way that objects appear smaller when they are further away and the way parallel lines appear to meet each other at a point in distance.

PRESTIGIOUS

Very much respected and admired, usually because of being important.

QUINTESSENTIAL

Being the most typical example or most important part of something.

SERENE

Peaceful and calm; worried by nothing.

BIOGRAPHY : KEN DONE (AM)



Ken Done. Photography by Stuart Spence

Kenneth Stephen Done AM, or Ken Done as he is known is one of Australia's most celebrated artists. He started his career as an Art Director working in the advertising industry, but at 40 decided to focus on bringing an artist and had his first sole exhibition in 1980. Ken Done has been a Goodwill Ambassador for UNICEF since 1988 and received the Order of Australia (A.M.) for his services in Art, Design and Tourism in 1992. Together with his wife, Judy Done, Ken created the company "Done Art and Design." The company won the Fashion Industries of Australia's, Grand Award in 1993.

He has had over 100 solo shows around the world including Europe, USA and Japan. Ken Done's bright and vivid paintings continue to be viewed and enjoyed by Australians and the world. Some of his iconic artworks include the Australian landscape and a series of works for the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games.

PAINTINGS YOU PROBABLY HAVEN'T SEEN

SELECTED WORKS 2000 - 2020

“These paintings were all done since the year 2000. They are sometimes works done on location or sometimes in the studio. And some are just what was in my imagination.”
- KEN DONE

Paintings You Probably Haven't Seen: Selected Works 2000 – 2020, is like looking through a window into Ken Done's world: a glimpse into his daily life painting in his studio, strolling along the yellow sands of the beach or his imaginative dreams of poetry.

We will look at Ken Done's works through three key themes:

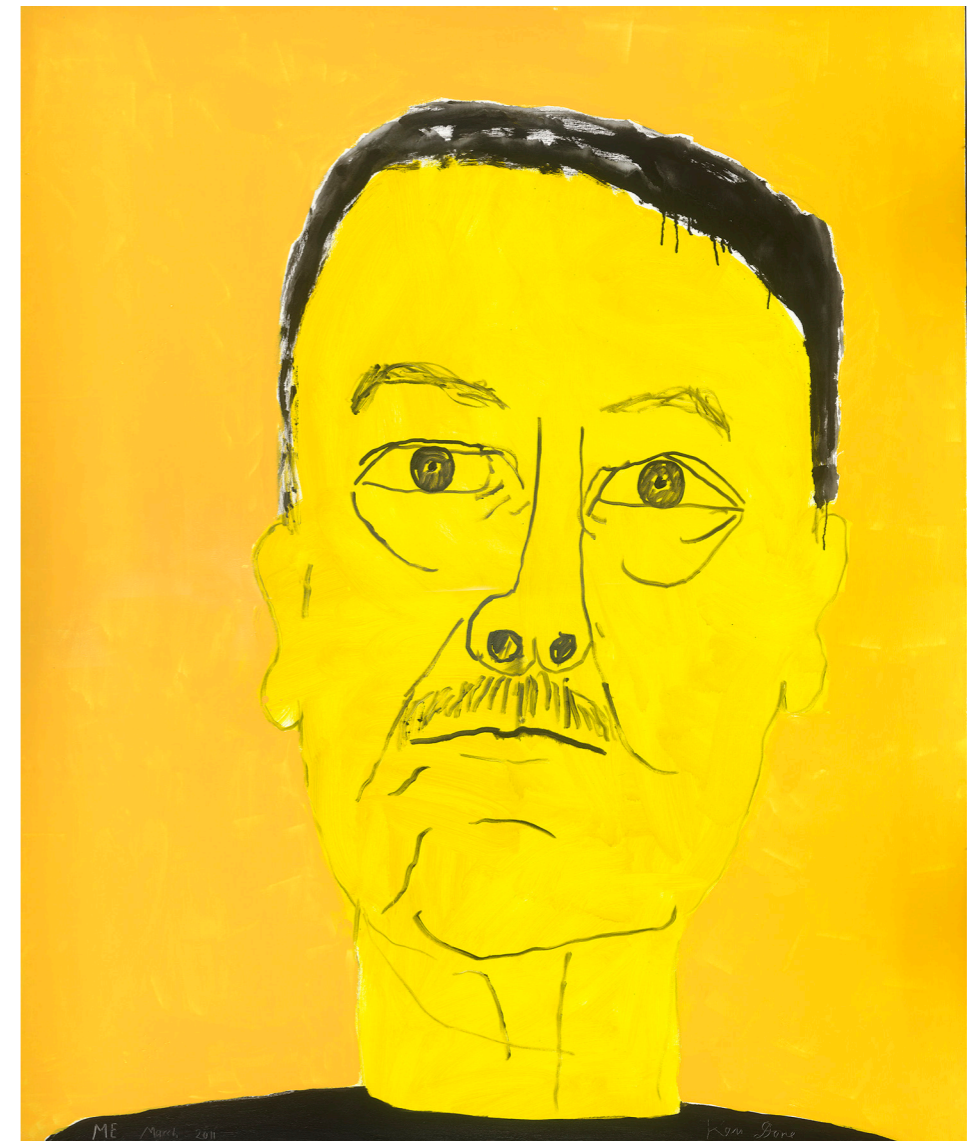
- Portraiture
- Landscapes
- Dreams.

These key themes will help us understand his paintings in detail.

PORTRAITURE

Portraiture is the artistic process of creating an artwork based on a person. The portrait shows something about the person – who they are. A self-portrait is when the artist creates a portrait of themselves. Though some portraits show only **fragments** of the person – like their pet, belongings or even a place.

Artists create portraiture to **convey** the subject's **moods**, appearance or perhaps a memory, to **immortalise** them. We can tell a lot about the artist and their portraits by their use of colour, shape and design.



ME, 2011, oil and acrylic on linen, 182 x 153 cm

ME

Me, is a mono-chromatic self-portrait. Ken Done entered it for the Archibald Prize, a prestigious portrait prize held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. 'This painting took me a little over 70 years and one hour to paint', Ken Done states.

At a glance, yellow is perhaps the most striking part of the painting. 'Yellow has always been my favourite colour. It's strong, optimistic and sometimes on the edge of madness – like me,' he says.

Thinking about the dimensions you realise that it is a huge painting. Your eyes locks eyes with his, as he stares directly back at you. The thin black lines traces around his wrinkles, his nose and the rest of his face.

Big Ideas: Identity, Age, Time

Questions and Activities:

- Why did Ken Done use the colour yellow to paint himself?
- He used lots of lines to paint his face. What do these lines represent? How does it help us tell his age.
- Using a mirror, look at your face. What do you see? Draw a self-portrait.

JUDY



Ken Done loves to paint his wife, Judy. She was his **muse**, and inspired him to create many artworks devoted to her. Judy loved their garden and was always seen tending the flowers and plants. Ken Done always painted her with beautiful, colourful flowers surrounding her. Flowers became a theme when he painted Judy.

In Judy, we see the dark outline of her face. She is almost hidden. The bed of multi-coloured flowers covers the entire painting. Judy's expression is soft and **serene**. Perhaps Done had captured his love of Judy, the flowers a symbol of the love and growth they have together.

Big Ideas: Love, Home, Growth

Questions and Activities:

- What did Judy like to do in their home?
- Look at the many flowers on Judy. What colours can you see?
- Where do you see plants and flowers? Draw your favourite colourful flowers

SPOT



Spot was Ken Done's loveable dog. Like Judy, Spot was also Ken Done's muse and painted him often, either at his coastal studio by Chinaman's Beach, or at his Mosman studio in Sydney.

Here we see a **mono-chromatic** pattern of black spots and a painted black frame with the years '1986 – 2001'. Perhaps this is a memorial painting of Spot. Spot looks like he has just turned his happy little head to smile at you, even his tail is wagging!

Spot was featured in an exhibition called *The Popular Pet Show* in the Canberra Portrait Gallery, 2016. Imagine, little Spot amongst other portraits of famous pets, he has become quite the superstar!

Big Ideas: Colour, Companionship, Memorial

Questions and Activities:

- What is your first impression when looking at *Spot*? How does *Spot* make you feel?
- Using the structural frame, compare *Judy* and *Spot*. What are the differences and similarities?
- Do you have a pet? Or know someone who does? Or do you have a dream of having a pet of your own? Paint a portrait of a pet (imaginary or real).

MADONNA AND DOG



Madonna and dog, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 80 x 100 cm

Ken Done was very fond of both Judy and Spot and often painted them. Like *Spot*, *Madonna and dog* was entered for the *Popular Pet Show*. The 'Madonna' in Christianity means the Virgin Mary, but here in place of the Virgin Mary is his wife, Judy, with a radiating **halo** above her head. The Virgin Mary was often painted with Jesus as a baby. Here, in place of Jesus, Judy is cradling Spot, like a newborn, with his little paws and tail curled into her arms.

If you look closely, the bright blue painting hanging in this room, on the left, is a yacht with a very faint mast that resembles the cross. *Madonna and dog* is seen with a lot of religious imagery but the most striking feature of this painting are the vivid colours, a nod to one of his favourite artists, the **French Fauvist**, Henri Matisse. This artwork is **quintessential** to Done's painting style and design.

Big Ideas: Religious Imagery Adoration, Fondness

Questions and Activities:

- Describe Ken Done's use of colour, shape and space in this painting.
- Why do you think Ken Done paints Judy and Spot so often?
- Imagine you are Judy cradling Spot. Using the subjective frame, how does it feel to be in the same position? Write about a special moment between you and your pet or friend.

LANDSCAPE

Landscape art is an artistic process of creating works based on the natural environment. From beaches to rivers, forests to cliffs and mountains to the bushland, artists have been inspired by the wonderful landscapes that surround us.

A landscape shows us a place that the artist has lived in, travelled to, or imagined. To us, looking at landscape art can transport us to a familiar place or a long-ago memory.

Artists sometimes add man-made parts to their landscape, such as houses, bridges, buildings, objects and modes of transport amongst others to give the landscape a sense of place and character.



NIGHT DIVE I

Imagine being by the ocean, at night, standing over the dark water waiting to take the plunge into the deep. You take a deep breath ... SPLASH!!! The sound of the water gushes behind you, as you enter the cold, dark waters of the ocean. What can you see?

Night Dive I was a direct response to Ken Done's first time taking a night dive.

"It was a bit scary...On the edge of your vision, you always imagine there might be something about to take a nip out of you."

The painting shows the bottom of the ocean at night – dark with strange, colourful coral and floating creatures. Parts of the painting look **translucent**, ghostly and unusual. Perhaps Done wanted to capture a sense of feeling, his excitement of a new place to explore, a memory, rather than a picture-perfect painting of the deep sea.

Done states, " ... I really like the picture, and it shows you the difference between painting and photography. In a painting, you can show the feeling of something, and you can play all kinds of games. "

Big Ideas: Experiences, Feeling, Memory

Questions and Activities:

- Describe Ken Done's experience of night diving, what was it like?
- Which colour dominates this painting? Why do you think Ken Done chose this particular colour?
- Have you ever experienced a 'first-time' of something? Maybe it was your first day of school, or your first time on a holiday. Write a recount about your experience.

YELLOW BEACH II



Yellow beach II, 2016, acrylic on linen, 152 x 122 cm

Big Ideas: Perspective, Nostalgia, Observation

Questions and Activities:

- What are the different lines and shapes in Yellow Beach II?
- Let's look at the figures in this painting. What different perspectives can you see?
- Do you remember a beach holiday with family and friends? Create a painting of this moment.

The beach is the **quintessential** landscape of Australia, and we are surrounded by so many. The yellow sands and the crystal blue waters reminds us of hot days in summer, holidaying with family and friends. In *Yellow Beach II*, we see the way Done observes the beach lifestyle and celebration of the life that Australia has to give.

Ken Done loved the beach so much that he had a studio in Chinaman's Beach. Yellow **dominates** this painting, which not only depicts the yellow sand at the beach, but Done also liked to use yellow, as it was his favourite colour. Done made several panels of *Yellow Beach*, this being the second.

You can see figures in different **perspectives** and positions – the figures being people. The **foreshortened** sunbathing person with tan skin, the red sunburnt figure on its side sitting, towels from a bird's eye view and other various objects people take to the beach. Like most of Ken Done's paintings, we can relate to this image in a **nostalgic** way, and it takes us back to our own experiences of the beach.

LOOKING TO THE BEACH



Looking to the Beach, 2005, oil and acrylic on canvas, 122 x 183 cm

Looking to the Beach is a great example of looking through Ken Done's world in his studio. We are transported to Ken Done's work space: we can see the room, dimly lit. There is a chair to the left and his colourful paint palette in the middle and a small round table next to it. To the right we see figures from Arnhem Land and Papua New Guinea displayed with his plastic sand spades, covered in blobs of paint, hanging on the wall.

But what we can see directly in the middle is the beach, with its soft yellows, colourful **abstract** figures dotted around the canvas and a large palm tree. This observation could be Ken Done, making, and painting a work in progress.

Big Ideas: Space, Personal Belongings, Environment

Questions and Activities:

- When looking at this painting, how is space shown? Think about the placement of the objects, how big or small are they? Describe this in a few sentences.
- Look at the figures on the beach painting in the middle. What are these blobs and shapes? Write this down in a list.
- Look at your own bedroom. What kind of objects do you see? How does this space tell us about yourself? Draw a quick sketch of your bedroom.

DREAMS

Sometimes while we sleep, thoughts and images begin to appear. They could be a mix of memories, emotions, things we have seen and experienced or just unexplainable situations that occur randomly in our sleep. From a child to an adult, we have all experienced a dream at some stage in our lives.

Dreams can be vivid, wonderful, frightening, fantastical, confusing and relaxing. They can be an escape of the reality we live in.

Artists are full of wild dreams and imaginations. They use theirs to explore new ideas. New colours, shapes, ways of creating and even inventing. Creating art is a way of showing and expressing their dreams.



Butterfly dreams I, yellow, 2006, enamel and oil crayon on canvas, each 100 x 80cm (1 of 4 panels)

BUTTERFLY DREAMS I, YELLOW

After a caterpillar leaves its cocoon, it transforms into a butterfly. Butterflies live very short lives and spend their remaining days amongst beautiful flowers. Ken Done wanted to show this period of time, between a butterfly's life through their dreams.

Butterfly dreams I, is part of 4 yellow panels that sit side by side. On this panel we can see some faint writing, a poem. The rest is written on all four panels that says:

"I would learn
of their dreams in flowers
but ah!
Butterflies have no voice."

Faintly painted delicate wildflowers, mushrooms, flower petals, leaves and stems adorn this panel. Ken Done stated that, "...if a butterfly slept and had a dream, that's what it would be about..."

Big Ideas: Words, Poetry, Thoughts

Questions and Activities:

- What is the main idea of this artwork? How can you tell? Write your ideas down.
- Ken Done uses very light and dry brushstrokes in this painting. Why do you think he uses this technique? Write why in a few sentences.
- Have you ever had a wild dream? Recount your dream in a drawing.

HAIKU SUITE III: FIRST DREAM (PANEL 1)



Haiku suite III: First Dream, 1996 – 2000, acrylic on canvas, 100 x 80 cm

Ken Done spent some time in Japan and exhibited his works there. He was inspired by the Japanese poetry writing known as *Haiku*.

Haikus are written in a specific way, where a 5-7-5 unrhymed structure is carried out:

First line has 5 syllables

Second line has 7 syllables

Third and final line has 5 syllables

Haikus often highlight a specific moment in time. In this artwork Ken Done writes about *Hatsuyume*, meaning the first dream you experience in the new year. In Japanese culture, the *Hatsuyume*, or first dream experienced, indicates or predicts the outlook of your new year. The poem roughly states that “Too good, hatsuyume, must be a lie”.

Big Ideas: Culture, Dreams, Outlook

Questions and Activities:

- Can you guess the two figures above and below the poetry? What do you think they are?
- The *haiku* style of poetry highlights a moment in time. Try writing your own *haiku* about your day.

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TRANSLATION

Hatsuyume – information and translation for *Haiku suite: III First Dream*, obtained from Japanese Sydney-based artist, Reiko Azuma, June 23 2021.

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