

Art Gallery online with Google

By R.I. Nagy

Over 100 artworks from Central Goldfields Art Gallery can now be viewed online on Google Arts & Culture.

This is the result of a new partnership between Google and the Gallery.

Google Arts & Culture is an online platform of high-resolution images and videos of artworks and cultural artifacts from cultural institutions throughout the world.

Its mission is to 'preserve and bring the world's art and culture online so it's accessible to anyone, anywhere'.

The gallery is the latest Australian partner to join more than 2,000 cultural institutions from over 80 countries across the globe, bringing key works from regional Victoria online for the world to explore and enjoy.

The launch of the online site in November was the result of 12 months' hard work by the gallery.

While the focus of most public art galleries is their collection, the sharing of those works and associated content has become an increasing priority.

"There's many ways of doing it," said Central Goldfields Art Gallery Curator and Education Officer Helen Kaptein.

"But certainly we would all be aware of the power of technology to digitise images and make collections more accessible."

The gallery's Google Arts

& Culture site allows people to view high-resolution images of artworks held in its collection online, for free.

Viewers can also see contextual information about each work, zoom in to reveal details (and see the work closer than they'd ever be able to get in a physical gallery), and search via medium, time period, and colour.

Currently there are also two virtual exhibitions on the site where audiences can explore artistic responses to landscape within Victoria's Central Goldfields region of Dja Dja Wurrung Country, and textiles from the Golden Textures Award Exhibition matched with insights from their creators.

Being able to share new facets of the collection this way has been exciting, but it has also helped maintain a link between the collection and the community while the Gallery is closed for renovation.

"It's very timely that it launched when the public gallery was closed," Ms Kaptein said.

"We open up access in a way that was never possible before, even in the physical gallery. "Only at any one time will there be a tiny percentage of the collection on display."

The idea for the project was conceived before the COVID-19 pandemic caused the shutdown of many of the world's cultural institutions.

"I was aware of this movement of digitising collections in museology in Australia

and beyond and I really wanted this to happen for Central Goldfields," Ms Kaptein said.

"We started by scoping out the project and creating a timeline of what would be involved. "The end point was having the collection online."

The Gallery obtained funding for the project through the State Government's *Working for Victoria* program.

This initiative was part of the state government's \$1.7 billion Economic Survival Package to assist communities by stimulating economies.

A partnership was formed between *Working for Victoria* and Creative Victoria to support regional galleries and museums digitising collections and curation.

These projects were delivered in collaboration with the Australian Museums and Galleries Association Victoria.

Leading museum professional Dr Megan Cardamone was employed by the Gallery to complete a large component of the work.

The first step to be completed was a full audit of the collection.

The next step was digitising the content.

"That was a huge task, as our collection numbers nearly 200 works," said Ms Kaptein.

The digitisation process was implemented publicly, with Dr Cardamone set up in the gallery so that visitors could see the process in action.

Another key part of the project was developing a copyright agreement for each work, which involved discussion with the Arts Law Centre of Australia and a legal approval process.

"We can't just go forth and put images on the web," said Ms Kaptein.

"Even though the gallery owns the artwork, we had to go back to the copyright holder, whether that's the artist or the estate."

Obtaining all the information needed for the agreements involved extensive detective work, including going through archives and sourcing community knowledge.

"Overwhelmingly we received a yes from artists or copyright holders that they were willing for these professional images of their artwork to be uploaded onto this site for spreading awareness and public enjoyment and knowledge."

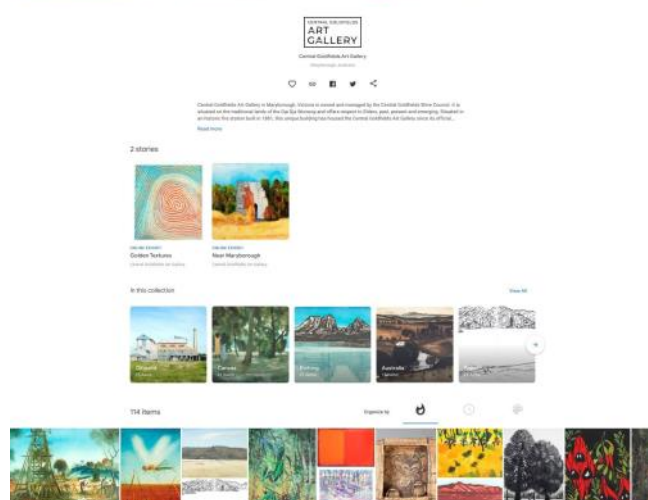
The only images not on the site were those where the copyright agreement wasn't approved.

Once all the administrative elements and digitisation had been completed, a decision had to be made about how to best showcase the collection.

"We looked at a variety of platforms and we thought that Google Arts & Culture offered really interesting capabilities within its site," Ms Kaptein said.

"We had to put a case to them to be accepted, and they did accept us."

"We worked very closely



A screenshot of the Central Goldfields Art Gallery's Google Arts & Culture home page.

with them at all levels, so it was a partnership.

"The culmination of all that was the launch."

The Gallery's Google Arts & Culture site specifically introduces viewers to works of art that have a relationship to Central Goldfields, as well as key examples of excellence in Australian art.

As new works become available, they will be added to the site to ensure that there is always fresh content available.

It is hoped that eventually there will also be more video content, especially of artists in their creation phase.

"For the public to be able

to see the artist in their studio environment is really great interpretive information.

"It builds knowledge," Ms Kaptein said.

"When you go into a gallery everything is beautiful but art is hard work, and video creates more appreciation, which is important for a public gallery."

To view items from the permanent collection and appreciate all the effort that went into this project, visit Central Goldfields Art Gallery's Google Arts & Culture site at <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/central-goldfields-art-gallery>.



Grassfires move so quickly, it's impossible to outrun them.

This summer, significant pasture growth in paddocks and roadsides means that fast-moving grassfires will be a serious risk across Victoria. Rural grassfires can be just as dangerous as bushfires, and can actually spread even faster, travelling at speeds of up to 25km/h. If you live close to open paddocks or grasslands, you could be at risk and need to be prepared. On high-risk Fire Danger Rated days, the safest option is to leave early.

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