



EDUCATION KIT

EUGENE VON GUÉRARD: ARTIST—TRAVELLER

ART GALLERY OF BALLARAT

CONTENTS

Eugene von Guérard: Artist–Traveller	3
Learning Activities	4
Artist–traveller–Documenter	5
Sketchbook to Studio: von Guérard’s process and working methods	6
Eugene von Guérard letter to James Smith on the painting of <i>Old Ballarat</i>	10
Learning Activities	11
Rush for Gold	12
Learning Activities	16
Shifting landscape	17
Shifting landscape: Von Guérard’s impact on land management	19
Learning Activities	20
Indigenous people in victoria: Indigenous life pre-colonisation	21
Early depictions after colonisation	22
The Wadawurrung people	23
Wadawurrung and the Gold Rush	24
Learning Activities	25
Perceptions of place	26
Inspired by von Guérard	27
Learning Activities	28
Beyond the classroom	29

EUGENE VON GUÉRARD: ARTIST–TRAVELLER

One of Australia’s foremost landscape painters, Eugene von Guérard (1811–1901) captured the rugged subtleties of the nineteenth-century Australian landscape. His romantic interpretations of the landscape are important in both Australian art and Australia’s colonial history, documenting the country’s growth and change through a key part of the nineteenth century. The artist’s nomadic practice led to the creation of numerous important works illustrating idyllic vistas of the Australian bush, as well as the erosion of land and vegetation caused by both man-made and natural forces.

Von Guérard’s process from sketchbook to studio gives an extraordinary insight into the artist practice, through the figure of the artist–traveller.

The notion of artist–traveller was not new for von Guérard — it was a practice he had developed from a young age. In 1826, at the age of fifteen, he left his birthplace Vienna for Italy with his father Bernard von Guérard, a court painter of miniature portraits for Emperor Francis 1, forging a love of travel and adventure. The two of them travelled extensively throughout Italy, sketching and painting the landscape, so that, working alongside his father, von Guérard began to develop his technical knowledge and skills. A desire for seeking the honesty of the landscape was further developed in Rome, where he studied under Italian landscape painter Giambattista Bassi. During this time, he associated with a group known as the Nazarenes, a group who sought to revive honesty and spirituality in art.

In 1838, eighteen months after the death of his father, von Guérard went to Germany to study at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art, a leading art school of the era. In Düsseldorf he studied progressive landscape painting under the guidance of German landscape painter Johann Wilhem Schirmer. During this time von Guérard built upon and refined his technical and aesthetic approach to landscape painting. Influenced by Schirmer’s interest in the Dutch tradition of landscape painting, von Guérard refined his working process further, with a focus on working and seeking inspiration directly from nature. The

practice of observing and translating visions of the natural world was also inspired by the geographic and scientific philosophies of Alexander von Humboldt, who actively encouraged artists to travel to the ‘new world’, places like Australia, to document and record the landscape with a scientific eye.

Von Guérard spent twelve years in Düsseldorf honing his skills and developing his personal and professional life, but in 1852 he found himself destined for Australian shores.

1851 marked an era of great change and growth for the Australian colonies. The discovery of gold in Ballarat in late August 1851 led to a frenzied influx of migrants, all intent on finding their fortune. Von Guérard was no different. Sparked by gold fever and driven by curiosity about the ‘New World’, it was with an inquiring eye and mind and an adventurous spirit that he boarded the ship *Windermere* in London on 17 August 1852, destined for the Victorian gold fields.

On 28 December 1852, at the age of forty-one, von Guérard arrived in Melbourne, and by mid-January 1853 he had made his way to the Ballarat goldfields, where he spent thirteen months experiencing the harsh and tough realities of a gold miner. During this time, he kept extensive field sketches, notes and diary entries detailing the sights, sounds and experiences of the goldfields, documenting both the working life on the goldfields as well as the natural environment of the region. Von Guérard returned to Geelong in February 1854. In July of the same year he settled in Melbourne and was reunited with his newly arrived fiancée Louise Arnz. The pair married on 15 July 1854, two days after her arrival.

For the next twenty-eight years, von Guérard lived in Melbourne. During this time, he travelled extensively throughout south-eastern Australia, sketching and documenting the landscape. The studies that he made on these expeditions were to become the extensive catalogue of drawings and paintings he is renowned for today.

In 1870, von Guérard was appointed the first Master of the School of Painting as well as the first curator at the National Gallery of Victoria. In 1882 he returned to Germany. In 1891 he moved to London to be with his daughter, son-in-law and, later, grandson. He spent his last decade in London, where he died in 1901 aged 89.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

EUGENE VON GUÉRARD: ARTIST–TRAVELLER

Activity 1, VCE Studio Art: Historical and Cultural Context

Using images sourced from the internet, create a visual, annotated timeline of von Guérard's life. Using the information on page 3 as a guide include any other significant global events which were happening at the same time.

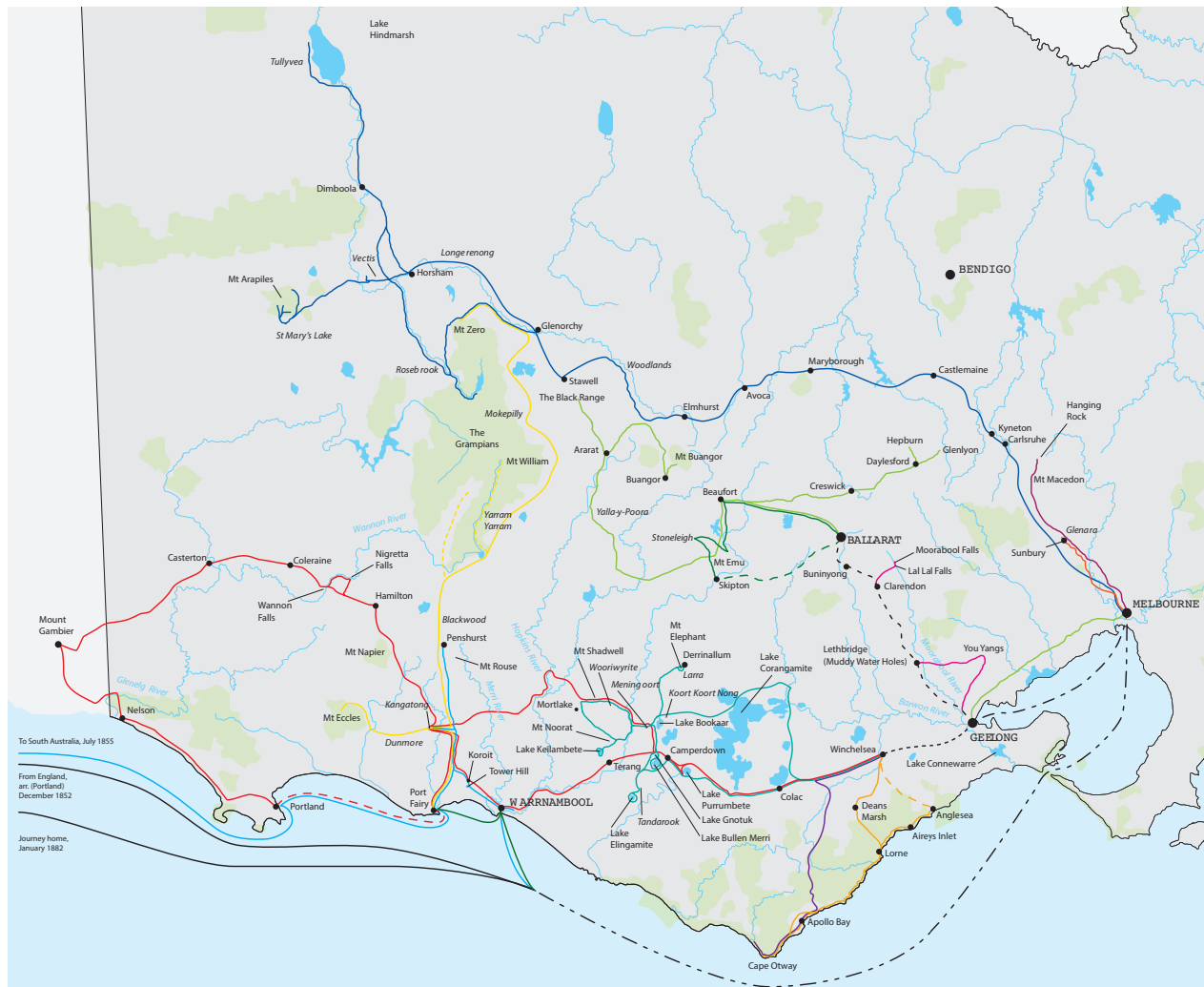
Activity 2, Geography 3–10

Using a map of the world, illustrate von Guérard's movements from his birth in Vienna in 1811 to his death in London in 1901. Label the map using key facts, and illustrate it using images of von Guérard's artworks.

ARTIST-TRAVELLER-DOCUMENTER

Western Victoria

The following map of von Guérard's journeys in Western Victoria indicate the routes followed on his sketching expeditions, based on the information in his sketchbooks.



- | | | | |
|-------------|---------------------------------------|-------|------------------------|
| ----- | 1852, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, (62) | ----- | December 1857 |
| - - - - | 1853, 54, 56, 64, 66 | ----- | October 1859 |
| . - . - . - | 1855, 56, 82 | ----- | April 1862 |
| - - - - - | March 1857, December 1857, 1859, 1862 | ----- | March 1864 |
| ----- | July–August 1855 | ----- | April–June 1864 |
| ----- | February–March 1856 | ----- | May 1866 |
| ----- | May–June 1856 | ----- | December 1866 |
| ----- | March–April 1857 | ----- | September–October 1868 |

SKETCHBOOK TO STUDIO: VON GUÉRARD'S PROCESS AND WORKING METHODS

First and foremost, von Guérard was an artist-traveller; he documented his journeys and expeditions in his sketchbooks. There are forty-seven known sketchbooks that record his impressions of Italy, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and England. He used these sketchbooks to document the landscape and personal experiences as he travelled to new and sometime very hard-to-reach places. The small pocket-sized sketchbooks became documentations of his journeys; filled with quick sketches and more detailed studies. Working within in the constraints of the small format sketchbook, von Guérard was able to capture the sublime beauty and expanse of the natural world.

Whilst studying at the Düsseldorf Academy, von Guérard, experimented with oil sketches, painting outdoors to conduct studies directly from nature. Although skilled at this process, his preference was to use pencil or pen and ink in a sketchbook, later reworking selected studies into refined and finished drawing and paintings. It was this process that he undertook on his Australian expeditions.

He was not restrained by the scale of his sketchbooks: when completing large vistas or panoramas, he would use multiple pages. Once a page was filled, he would label the image with the German word 'Fortsetzung', meaning continuation, and using a numbering system, would continue his drawing over one or more other pages. If completing a study on a single piece of paper, he would simply attach another piece where he wished the composition to continue.

Von Guérard did not often work in colour; instead he devised a system for documenting colour using symbols related to a key. He would use different-shaped symbols pertaining to different colours to record the colours for the composition. This system was then translated into actual colours within the studio.

Each sketchbook is numbered and contains notes detailing the journeys and places he visited. His sketchbooks act not only as a precise documentation of the colonial landscape and insight into the artist's practice but also exists as an important historical record about his journeys and the places he visited.



Eugene von Guérard
Basin Bank Lake f. Mac Nickles Station
(Bullen Merri) 14. March 1857 1857
folio 9, Sketchbook XXVI
State Library of NSW

SKETCHBOOK TO STUDIO: VON GUÉRARD'S PROCESS AND WORKING METHODS

Over the twenty-eight years von Guérard spent in Australia, he undertook numerous sketching excursions and expeditions. He travelled by steam-train, carriage, horseback and foot to parts of Australia which were often pristine, remote and difficult to access, sketching and recording the landscape. Sometimes these expeditions were scientific in nature, whilst at other times he used them to capture the imagery required to fulfil commissions, yet on each expedition he documented the vast expanse and minute details of the Australian landscape. These sketching expeditions also exposed him to the fury and unpredictability of nature. Through his sketchbook field studies and notes, he was able to visualise these experiences when he was back in his studio.

Artworks such as *Bushfire* 1859 and *Ballarat as it was in the Summer of 1853–54* 1884 give us invaluable insights into von Guérard's working method. The sketchbook drawings, painting and presentation drawing clearly illustrate his artistic and studio practices.



Eugene von Guérard
Lake Timboon ... Cherry Tree 20th March 1857 [Bushfire] 1857
folio 18, Sketchbook XXVI
State Library of NSW

In March 1857, whilst journeying through south-western Victoria, near the site of the later town of Camperdown, von Guérard experienced a common yet frightening event all too prevalent in the Australian landscape: the uncontrollable rage of a bushfire. Sketchbook in hand, von Guérard captured the event: the suffocating wall of flames and smoke, the dry brittle foliage-remnants of a long dry summer, the oppressive heat. As the fire rages, Lake Bookaar glistens with an orange hue, whilst the silhouette of Mount Elephant is masked by the blanket of smoke and flames. In this small-scale sketch, the composition is for the most part resolved, and the addition of colour helps to accurately capture the event and serves as important documentation in the transformation of the image.

The *Bushfire* painting was completed in 1859, two years after the initial sketch. In the studio, von Guérard transformed his field study, completing a detailed depiction of the event using oil paint on canvas. Comparing the initial sketch and the completed painting, small compositional changes have been made. The fire and smoke fill the composition, swallowing the most prominent landmark of the area, Mount Elephant, yet the bones of the original drawing are still present. The contrasts between the blackened foreground and illuminating red of the sky emphasises the flames creating a sense of urgency and fear, documenting the harsh realities of the Australian landscape. The painting was acquired by John Lang Currie, the owner of Larra homestead located near Mount Elephant and the bushfire event.



Eugene von Guérard
Bushfire 1859
(also known as Bushfire between Mount Elephant and Timboon) 1859
oil on canvas, 34.8 x 56.3 cm
Art Gallery of Ballarat, Gift of Lady Currie in memory of her husband,
the late Sir Alan Currie, 1949

SKETCHBOOK TO STUDIO: VON GUÉRARD'S PROCESS AND WORKING METHODS

A presentation drawing of the bushfire was commissioned by the Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, in 1859, as part of a series of sixteen drawings completed between 1859–63. In the drawing, von Guérard again draws inspiration, composition, colour and detail from his initial sketchbook study. Keeping to the subtle colours present in the Australian landscape and evident in the original sketchbook study, he captures the sublime expanse of the Western District. The refinement of the

composition and detail is evident with the mountain clearly depicted on the far righthand side, the fire's reflection in Lake Bookaar enhanced and the reworking of the men on horseback fleeing the scene. The foreground has also been reworked to further balance the composition. The presentation drawing clearly reveals the artist's process from the sketchbook to the studio, highlighting the refinement of the preliminary subject over a period of years.



Eugene von Guérard
Bushfire (also known as 'You Yangs') c.1860
folio 16 'Views, mainly of Victoria' 1859–1863
State Library of NSW

SKETCHBOOK TO STUDIO: VON GUÉRARD'S PROCESS AND WORKING METHODS

At the time von Guérard was practising, photography, invented in the early 1800s, was still a relatively new technology. As a means of recording our world it was vastly inferior to the methods of an artist: photography had a limited ability to capture detail and an absence of colour. Other factors also influenced the use of photography on the goldfields, in the earliest period. Prospectors preceded photographers; in the rush for gold there was very little time for a miner to stop and document the happenings and landscape of the goldfields. Therefore, works such as von Guérard's have become an important resource in understanding the life and landscape of this time.

In the summer of 1853-54, von Guérard sketched the view that lay before him from the plateau above the diggings. In the image he outlined the beginnings of the township that is now the Ballarat that we know today. The vantage-point from which the study made is now the site of Craig's Hotel on Lydiard Street. In a letter penned to art critic James Smith regarding the painting of *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853-54*, von Guérard describes elements of the township that still exist today, including St Alipius, Ballarat's first Catholic Church, and the Main road that runs out towards Buninyong. The image also illustrates the early life on the goldfields, including early forms of entertainment and the tensions brewing on the goldfields. The circus tent,

identifiable by its cylindrical shape sits just left of centre, in the middle of the image. To the far right of this, von Guérard has included a procession of diggers being led by police, referencing the lead up to the Eureka riot.

Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853-54 was commissioned by Ballarat businessman and art patron James Oddie approximately thirty years after the initial study, when the artist was no longer living in Australia. Von Guérard's ability to complete this work was based solely on his artistic process and the accurate and precise documentation of his onsite study. Von Guérard was able to access his sketches and notes pertaining to his time on the goldfields to accurately depict the scene. Only minor composition changes have been made: the orientation of the tent in the front left-hand corner, the addition of shadows cast by the clouds, the repositioning of trees and of course the addition of colour. Von Guérard outlines the importance of these compositional elements in his letter to James Smith (page 10).

In 1884, the field sketch was the only visual reference von Guérard had to work from. Today, photographic technology is widely used as a documentation tool. A photograph of the current landscape from the same vantage point reveals the changes in the landscape between then and now.



Eugene von Guérard
Vom publick haus zu Ballarat, 18 February 1854 1854
Art Gallery of Ballarat
Gift of Mrs Martell, 1938



Eugene von Guérard
Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853-4 1884
Art Gallery of Ballarat
Gift of James Oddie on Eureka Day, 1885

SKETCHBOOK TO STUDIO: EUGENE VON GUÉRARD'S LETTER TO JAMES SMITH ON THE PAINTING OF OLD BALLARAT.

Düsseldorf Capell Strasse no. 30

29 October 1884

Dear Mr. Smith,

At last I am able to send you news of the completion of the painting of old Ballarat, as it was the summer of 1853 to 54, after having worked almost uninterruptedly for three months.

The sketch which I possess of Ballarat at that time, is a small, highly finished drawing, only one foot in length, and I was very glad I had a long clear summer's day before me when I began the picture.

You may imagine I did my best to paint this subject as faithfully and correct as possible, regarding historical record of my dear old Ballarat. In order to keep the colour of the picture in accordance with the season when I made the sketch (in the height of summer) I had to give the grass a yellow tone; and to make it less monotonous in the centre, I have introduced partial shadow of the clouds.

The great number of tents and the many figures, was a long and tedious piece of work, for which I was obliged to use much stronger spectacles than usual. I hope the gentleman who kindly gave me the order and you, will be satisfied with the painting and that a number of old Ballarat men, still living, may recognise their stores and tents from the forms and positions of them in the picture.

I have done all I could to give a true representation of how Ballarat looked at that time. Like all artists, I am the least able to judge whether I have been successful. In a few lines I wish to explain the chief objects of interest in the painting. Beginning on the left hand side of the painting: next to the first isolated tree, is the tent with a small cross on the top, this was the first Catholic church 'St Alipius'; next to it passes the road to Eureka and Brownhill Diggings, and beyond on the hill the edge of the forest, which extends over the distant Warrenheip hill and to the right of the picture in the direction of Buninyong, etc. The large tent in the flat represent Rows circus, the many various larger and smaller ones, stores and tents for amusement etc, etc, on the main road to Buninyong. Showing above and between them the Gravelpit lead, sloping down the hill to the flat, being still actively worked in its lower parts; beyond the line on the hillside is a large tent, which I believe, was the protestant church. To the right of the flat, with old surface diggings, at the foot of Goldenpoint, in the Valley leading to Prince Regent's gully, runs the road to Buninyong. I am very sorry that I possess no drawing prolonging the view over Goldenpoint itself, with the Old Post office, but I could not attempt to paint anything from memory in order to get this point into the picture which so far is a faithful portrait of old Ballarat, taken from the Commissioners Hill, near Bathes Public house (afterwards Craig's Hotel). In the foreground, one sees some characteristic tents; one partly dug into the sloping ground and another with an awning over it, as was used in summer.

With regards to the figures, enlivening the scene, I have introduced on the right hand a string of Diggers, escorted by Police, being led to the Lockup at the Commissioners Camp, arrested for neglecting to take Diggers licenses. These arrests were one of the chief causes of the riot of 1854.

Not having yet heard how long the pictures which I sent to Mr. Fletcher took on their voyage out by the Hamburg line of steamers, I think it preferable to send this one via London by one of the Oriental or P.&O. boats, and I hope the difference in freight will be very small. I shall not prepay the amount charged, as I think it better only to pay after the safe arrival of the case in Melbourne.

The packing in a well made tinlined case, I will superintend personally, so as to be certain that everything is done in perfect order.

I did not exhibit the picture here, because a painting of that kind, without a frame, is not likely to produce the desired effect, besides our public does not take an interest in landscapes, which are not Italian, Norwegian or German. Foreign and especially Australian pictures of such specially local interest as the view of Ballarat would not be understood neither as regard to subject nor the color. A few friends who saw it considered it a very interesting painting, descriptive of the early time of the Australian Diggings.

If possible I should be very glad if a frame of a good width and depth could be made before the arrival of the picture, being desirous the its owner should only see it when properly framed as the subject especially requires a surrounding which relieves monotony.

The exact size of the canvas is 54 1/4 length X 29 1/8 inches in height. The ornamentation of the frame should be small to be in keeping with the small objects on the picture. I am sure you will do your best for the presentation of my work

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

SKETCHBOOK TO STUDIO

Activity 1, Visual Arts 3–10: Explore and express ideas, Visual Arts Practices

Creating a Sketchbook

The sketchbook was an important part of von Guérard's practice: he would often adapt pre-made sketchbooks to suit the landscape or scene he was recording. If the scene he was drawing extended the parameters of the page, he would simply attach another piece of paper to extend the page. If a sketchbook wasn't to hand, he would draw on loose pieces of paper or in non-traditional drawing books.

Explore how von Guérard used sketchbooks as a tool to develop his art practice.

Select a variety of different drawing surfaces. Drawing surfaces may include: good quality drawing paper, watercolour paper, coloured paper, old greeting cards, brown paper bags, newspaper, old postcards, fabric scraps and discarded photocopy paper etc.

Prepare each surface so it is roughly the same size. The size and thickness of your sketchbook is dependent on the number of pages you choose to have and the size and density of each page.

Create a cover and back using card. Once you have all the pages, use a hole punch to punch holes down the spine. Once the holes are punched, bind the pages using string, wool or twine.

Select a list of objects, places and people you would like to draw in your sketchbook.

Experiment with different drawing media on each of the different surfaces including ink, charcoal, biro pen, graphite, and watercolour.

Activity 2, Visual Arts 3–10: Explore and express ideas, Visual Arts Practices, Present and Perform

Field Sketches

Field sketches were an important aspect of von Guérard's practice. As he travelled, he created a catalogue of field sketches documenting the landscape. He later transformed selected sketches into more resolved painting, prints and drawings.

Explore the artistic and studio practice of Eugene von Guérard.

As a class group, create a tour itinerary of interesting sites around your school, neighbourhood or town and then follow your tour itinerary, completing field sketches along the way.

In the classroom, share your field sketches with the class, discussing the similarities and differences between sketches drawn at the same location.

Select one image to develop further into a painting, print or digital drawing, documenting the making process as you go.

Present your work as part of an exhibition that explores the class's drawing expedition.

Activity 3, VCE Studio Art: Aesthetic Qualities

VCE Art: Structural Framework

Read through Eugene von Guérard's letter to James Smith on the painting of *Old Ballarat*.

Choose one of your own artworks

or

Tower Hill or Bushfire by von Guérard

and write a letter or email to your teacher explaining the artwork in detail. Explain the scale of the artwork, the composition of the artwork, the details within the artwork, how the art elements and principles have been used to create mood or feeling, the materials and processes used to create the artwork, the style of the artwork and who the intended audience is and how is it displayed.

RUSH FOR GOLD

Before 1838, Ballarat, and the surrounding district was inhabited by the Wadawurrung people. Over the year 1838, a number of European settlers made claim to the land, establishing pastoral settlements. By 1840, Ballarat and the surrounding districts had been occupied by European squatters, one of whom was William Cross Yuille. He named his station Ballarat, after the Aboriginal name for the area (balla arat) meaning a resting place.

It was here, in Ballarat, that gold was discovered, sparking the Victorian gold rush. In late August 1851, gold was discovered on the rise above Canadian Creek in the area now known as Golden Point. As word spread about the newly discovered goldfields, the population and therefore the economy of the Victorian colony boomed. People travelled from all over the world to seek their fortune on the goldfields, and as they arrived, a tent city grew. By 1852 the township of Ballarat had been established.

News of the goldfields spread throughout Europe and the world. Back in Düsseldorf, where von Guérard was struggling to make ends meet as an artist, the Ballarat goldfields appealed to his adventurous spirit and on 17 August 1852, he boarded the ship *Windermere* in London. On 28 December 1852, he arrived in Melbourne. From here he made his way to the goldfields of Ballarat, via Geelong.

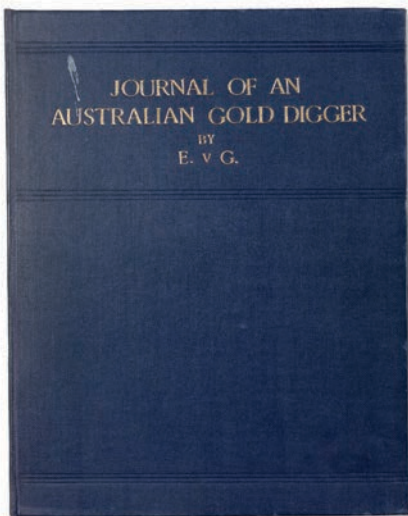
During the four-month journey to Australia, von Guérard struck up a friendship with a group of Frenchmen. It was in their company that he set off on the arduous

and potentially dangerous journey to the goldfields of Ballarat. Of that journey he wrote.

January 18th 1853

After travelling for a week, we have arrived at Ballarat, The journey has been interesting in many ways. The forests of immense gum-trees, the water holes by which we camped at night, the unpleasent discovery of of a scorpion as a bedfellow, the intolerable flies, etc were all new experineces. We occasionally passed human habitations, and one day met a poor young fellow who had been attacked by bushrangers, robbed of his horse, and all the money he possessed, and tired to a tree. When we saw him a he was in a cart with a man and a woman, who had heard his cries and rescued him. The poor fellows arm's and legs were terribly swallow from the tight ropes with which he had been bound to the tree.

Von Guérard documented his travels in a diary, recording his initial impressions of colonial life and the Australian landscape through both written entries and detailed sketches. The diary entries and sketches from this period offer an invaluable primary account of life on the Ballarat goldfields from the perspective of a European miner. On his arrival, he gave an initial account of the Ballarat diggings. He later wrote of the processes every miner was expected to undertake before staking a claim, including obtaining the now-notorious gold licence.



Eugene von Guérard
Cover, 'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.:
A pioneer of the fifties: leaves from the journal of an
Australian Digger, 18 August 1852–16 March 1854'
State Library of NSW



Eugene von Guérard
Chinaman's Gully, 23 Nov. [1853]
'Journal of an Australian Gold Digger by E.v.G.,
folio 8, [Sketchbook XX]
State Library of NSW

RUSH FOR GOLD

Janurary 18th 1853

Ballarat consists of tents and some buildings constructed of boards. One building, made of the trunks of trees, consitutes the prison, and is often the temporary abode of bushrangers, and also of diggers who can't- won't- pay there licences.

Janurary 23rd 1853

The last five days have been spent seeing the gold commissioner, Mr. Green, to ascertain the laws for diggers, and in obtaining our licences. And further to prepare our encampment. This necessitated the felling of trees, for the purpose of constructing a work-shop and store for our possessions, our tents being barely roomy enough for our personal shelter. The work, to which we were all new, was somewhat arduous at first, and caused much backache and blistering of hands. The evenings are a delight after the days

work, being both novel and picturesque. From every direction weary diggers are seen returing to their canvas homesteads, hundreds of fires are kindled and illuminate the scene, and at each tea is made and mutton is roasted. The evening meal finished, the air is filled with the sound of firearms being fired, in order to be reloaded anew before the night. A frenchman, name Fougery, with his wife, and several other has arrived from Calafornia- they have rigged up their tent close to ours, and make a pleasant adition to our party. Have had a very painful experiance being bitten by one of the gigantic black ants that are to be met with out here. The pain and swelling lasted several days. Received our licences, for which we pay 30/-permont. An encampment of police her, both mounted and on foot, have quite a military apperance.

Von Guérard and his company set up camp and on 25 January 1853 they pegged out claims at the Eureka and



Eugene von Guérard

Blackhill 21 Februar 1854

from unbound collection 'Melbourne, Ballarat, Eureka 1853-54'
State Library Victoria

RUSH FOR GOLD



Eugene von Guérard
Chinaman's Gully, 23 November 1853
 [Sketchbook XX]
 State Library of NSW



Eugene von Guérard
Ballarat diggings — miner and windlass, 26 January 1853
 [Sketchbook XX]
 State Library Victoria

Gravel Pit diggings. Over the next thirteen months, he worked tirelessly as a digger following the frenzied rush for gold. During this period, he continued to document his experiences of the goldfields.

Arriving during the 'Second Rush', a time when gold was not as easily found, it was necessary for diggers including von Guérard and his company to sink deep shafts, digging through hard rock to follow the leads deep underground. This work was both physically demanding and dangerous. Along with the actual construction of the shaft, there was the threat of a shaft collapsing or flooding and there was also the likelihood that the hard work would not yield a result.

January 27th

Having dug to a depth of twenty-four to twenty-five feet both at Eureka and Gravelpit, we came across rock in both places, our only gain being a practice in digging!

Living conditions on the goldfields were tough. As we can see in von Guérard's sketches, the canvas tents that often housed more than one digger were cramped and exposed to the elements. Mining was strenuous work and not only did diggers have to deal with the physical labour of mining, they also had to battle the elements: heat, dust storms and bushfires in the summer months and drenching rain, bone chilling winds, snow and sludge in the winter months. Von Guérard wrote about the hardships faced by the vocation on numerous occasions.

May 28th 1853

Having dug to a depth of eighteen feet, we found, on arriving at our claim yesterday, that much damage

had resulted from heavy rain. We worked like slaves to get the shaft back to anything like a possible condition. Until 2am we toiled at the making of a canvas awning to cover it, and so, at least partially to protect it from again being flooded. When finished we stretched this over a framework of wood, and then descended to try and empty the shaft of liquid mud. The nights are getting very cold and I have lined my tent with some strong calico.

January 2nd, 1854

The heat is intense, and bushfires are very bad. All night a wide expanse of fire has been visible in the direction of Warrenheip hills. The Leigh is entirely dried up, and only a couple of holes remain with tolerably bad water. The heat, the flies and the smoke-laden atmosphere makes existence almost intolerable.

Other hazards resulted from the poor weather and abandoned claims. The constant mining and sunken shafts resulted in a landscape full of danger and serious injury or death was common.

September 2nd 1853

Last night I was awakened by the arrival of a figure, apparently clad in a thick coating of slimy clay. In a drunken condition the man had fallen into a disused shaft, and only got out of it with great difficulty. A good fire and tea found him restored at day break. One hears quite often of diggers disappearing suddenly, and long afterwards their corpses are found at the bottom of shafts into which they have fallen, and been drowned in mud.

The strenuous working conditions on the goldfields led to tensions developing between different groups. Von Guérard both wrote about these tensions in his journal and incorporated elements into his paintings, such as the procession of digger being led away troopers in *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–54* 1884. He also referred to conflict in his journal.

December 27th 1853

This morning while preparing timber for our mines near Black Hill gully, I became aware of loud shrieks, and firing from the Eureka Line, and soon a cavalcade of some twenty mounted police, followed by thirty to thirty-five people on foot, and a vast number of diggers, hurried by in that direction. Later I saw the crowds in the distance being gradually dispersed by the police. It was, as I heard afterwards, a very bloody fight between neighbouring English and Irish diggers, leaving a number wounded and some dead on the ground.



Eugene von Guérard
Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–4 1884
 Art Gallery of Ballarat
 Gift of James Oddie on Eureka Day, 1885



Eugene von Guérard (detail)
Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–4 1884
 Art Gallery of Ballarat

This event is undocumented elsewhere, but major events, such as the Eureka Stockade which took place on 3 December 1854, confirm the unsettling air on the Ballarat goldfields during the early years.

Von Guérard's extensive journal entries and sketches also reveal the subtleties of life on the goldfields. Everyday happenings such as the illicit sale of alcohol and the everyday life of the growing township including the clothes people wore, the meals they ate and the entertainment they enjoyed. In *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–54* 1884, von Guérard has included a large prominent feature in the foreground to the image: a large circular tent where a touring circus performed. Von Guérard also referred to sports, including the now-popular team sport of cricket.

January 9th 1854

Going to Ballart flat today, I saw cricket being played for the first time out here. Heavy rains and thunder-storms have cooled the air, after a long spell of intense heat.

In February 1854, after a moderately successful venture on the Ballarat goldfields, von Guérard left for Melbourne. Before leaving, he had two rings forged from gold he had dug, intended for the finger of his beloved Louise Arnz who arrived in Melbourne in July 1854.

Melbourne was to become his home for the next twenty-eight years. From here, he travelled on expeditions, including to south-western and north-western Victoria in 1856, 1857 and 1868 and to Cape Otway in 1859 and 1862.



Eugene von Guérard (detail)
Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–4 1884
 Art Gallery of Ballarat

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

RUSH FOR GOLD

Activity 3, Visual Arts 3-10, Explore and Express, Visual Arts Practices

Read through *Rush for Gold* and select one diary entry. Use Photoshop to create a digital collage that recreates the scene. You may choose to use found images, scanned images or photographs.

Activity 4, VCE Studio Art: Historical and Cultural Context

VCE Art: Cultural Framework

Discuss the impact the gold rush had on the art practice of von Guérard before, during and after his time on the Ballarat goldfields. How important, do you believe his practice has been in the development of Australian Art and the perception of Australia as a country?

Activity 1, History 3-9: Historical sources as evidence

Imagine you have just landed on the Ballarat goldfields, after travelling from a distant country. Using the image of von Guérard's *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853-54* 1884 and sketches of the goldfields, write a series of diary entries detailing your arrival. Include the sights, sounds and smells, the natural landscape and other environmental factors including weather conditions.

Activity 2, History 3-9: Historical sources as evidence

Read through von Guérard's diary entries and examine his drawing and paintings. Imagine you have just discovered a large gold nugget and then write a detailed account of the discovery. Include the lead up to the discovery, the preparation of the mine shaft, the time of day and time of year, the weather conditions, any challenges you may have faced, the sounds and smells of the environment etc.

Beyond the Classroom

Visit the Art Gallery of Ballarat to view the Eugene von Guérard works held in the collection.

Visit the Art Gallery of Ballarat and participate in the Eureka Program.

Visit Sovereign Hill and explore the history of the goldfields.

SHIFTING LANDSCAPE

Von Guérard was fascinated by the natural landscape and hugely influenced by the nineteenth-century German geographer, naturalist, explorer, philosopher and scientist Alexander von Humboldt. Humboldt understood the natural world as biomes: the interconnection of geography, meteorology, flora, fauna, and culture within a unified ecosystem. Humboldt's unified view of the natural world influenced many artists including von Guérard to undertake accurate observations and depictions directly from nature. From 1855, von Guérard undertook four expeditions through the Western District of Victoria, recording the landscape with both an artistic and a scientific eye. These accurate depictions of the landscape can be used to show how the Western District has altered since colonisation and provide as a reference for landscape conservation.

Before the colonisation of Victoria's Western District, the volcanic terrain with its rich soils supported expansive gum forests, vast grasslands, swamps and pristine waterways. The fertile landscape attracted the squatters from 1830s onwards and they began to establish pastoral settlements. Farming along with the discovery of gold vastly altered the landscape of Western Victoria.

Von Guérard's sketches and paintings of the Ballarat goldfields illustrate the vast changes that have occurred since colonisation.

In the weeks leading up to his departure from the Ballarat goldfields, von Guérard noted the speed with which the population was growing, and the impact the increased mining was having on the Ballarat landscape.

January 17th 1854

Just a year since my arrival at Ballarat, and how changed it all is in that short time. Stretches of fine forest transformed into desolate-looking bare spaces, worked over and abandoned. In many parts, where a year ago all was life and activity, there now is a scene of desolation. At the same time the population has enormously increase, and there is less and less chance of having a lucky find, as at every new place that shows any promise, swarms of diggers settle down like flies on a midden.



Eugene von Guérard
*Golden Point Ballarat, and Flat, with part of
Black Hill as in July 1853* 1854
Art Gallery of Ballarat
Gift of James Oddie, 1891

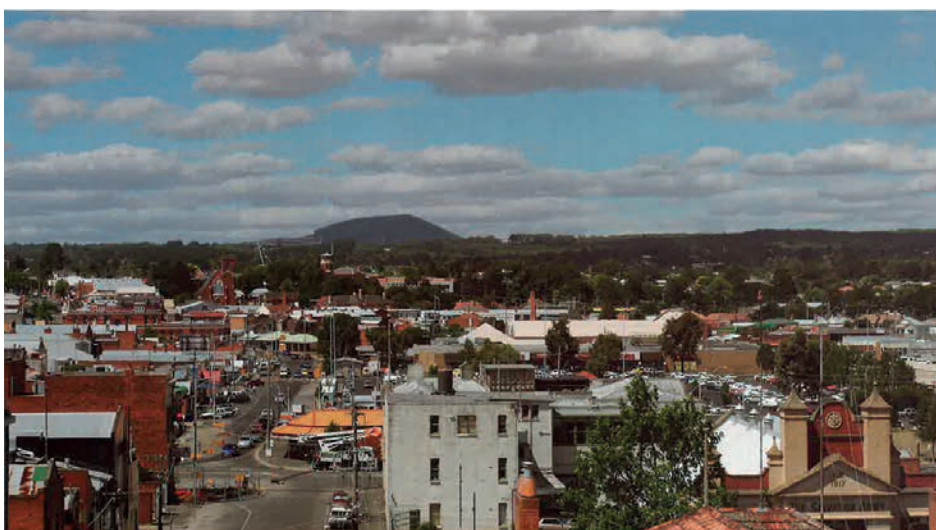
SHIFTING LANDSCAPE



Eugene von Guérard
Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853-54 1884



Eugene von Guérard
Ballarat from the fire brigade tower (looking East), 1870



Terry Kelly
the sesquicentennial view of Ballarat, 2004

SHIFTING LANDSCAPE: VON GUÉRARD'S IMPACT ON LAND MANAGEMENT



Eugene von Guérard
Tower Hill 1855

Warrnambool Art Gallery
On loan from the Department of Sustainability
and Environment. Gift of Mrs E. Thornton

Tower Hill sits just west of Warrnambool in the south-western district of Victoria in the traditional lands of the Koroit gundidj people. Created by a large volcanic eruption 30,000 years ago, the volcanic crater exists as a vast biome that alters with the seasons and weather conditions. The tuff rim of the crater is flanked by bushland which flourishes in the volcanic soils. From the swampy crater floor rises ten scoria cones laden with a diversity of flora and fauna. After heavy rain, the crater floods and the hills become islands, creating a 'nested maar'. Tower Hill is one of the largest maars or low-relief volcanic craters in the world and an important geological site in Victoria.

In 1855, James Dawson, owner of the pastoral property Kangatong, commissioned von Guérard to produce a painting of the Tower Hill site. Dawson respected the uniqueness and beauty of Tower Hill and wished to document the landscape before it was destroyed. On 6 August 1855 von Guérard made a detailed study of Tower Hill. In line with Humboldt's philosophies regarding the interconnectedness of nature, he recorded the plant life and geology with scientific accuracy. The result was a sublime, romantic and scientifically accurate interpretation of the Tower Hill landscape.

From the period of early settlement on, the pristine

landscape of Tower Hill was systematically destroyed. Clearing, grazing, quarrying for scoria, the damming of the lake, its use as an outlet for human waste and the introduction of foreign species of flora and fauna including rabbits and goats, all had a detrimental impact on the environment. In 1892, the area was granted National Park recognition, yet the destruction of the area continued until 1961, when it became a State Game Reserve and a major revegetation program began.

As part of the revegetation process, the Fisheries and Game Department looked to von Guérard's depiction of Tower Hill to understand the ecology of the landscape. Because of Humboldt's influence on Von Guérard's practice, his scientific documentation of the landscape enabled botanists to identify both the types of plants that grew in the area and the way in which they grew. From von Guérard's painting they were able to identify grass and ferns on the island, and tea-trees, wattles, sheoaks, banksias and eucalypts on the cones, with reeds and tussocks in the marshes. The revegetation also had a positive impact on the wildlife of the area, with native species successfully reintroduced including koalas, echidnas, wombats, sugar gliders, grey kangaroos, brushtail and ring tail possums as well as over 164 species of birds.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

SHIFTING LANDSCAPE

Activity 1, Geography 3–10: Geographical Knowledge

Using the image of Tower Hill, create an annotated poster or interactive digital image outlining the type of landscape, the geomorphic processes which produced the landscape, the effect humans have had on the landscape, the spiritual, cultural and aesthetic value of the landscape, including the significance to the traditional owners the Koroit Gundidj people.

Activity 2, Geography 3–10: Geographical Skills

Compare *Old Ballarat as it was the summer of 1853–54* 1884 by Eugene von Guérard with *The sesquicentennial view of Ballarat* 2004 by Terry Kelly. Explain how Ballarat has changed in the 150 years between the two images. What has brought about the change? Predict how Ballarat will change over the next 150 years: what will the city look, feel, smell like in 2146? What will the population be? What infrastructure will be needed? How will the natural environment be affected? What will be the implications of change? Use internet research to support your predictions. Present your findings to your classmates and compare your responses.

Activity 3, History 3–10: Cause and Effect

Annotate the series of images on page... that illustrate the change of the Ballarat landscape from 1853–54 to 2004. Explain what changes have occurred and what factors and historical events caused those changes. Use historical facts to support your explanation.

Activity 4, Visual Arts 3–10, Respond and Interpret

Imagine you are von Guérard sitting within the volcanic maar of Tower Hill. Explain the landscape which lies before you: what colours, textures shapes and forms do you see? How is the landscape composed. How do you feel sitting within that environment? You open your sketchbook — what is it about the view you want to communicate to the viewer, how do you want the viewer to feel? When you arrive back in the Melbourne studio, explain how you will apply the paint to capture the scene you recorded in your sketchbook. What do you want the painting to look like? What colours and textures are you going to use and why? How do you envisage your painting of Tower Hill being viewed into the future?

Activity 5, Visual Arts 3–10: Explore and express ideas, Visual Arts Practices

Von Guérard's images allow us to look back on the past and view how the landscape has changed over time. *Old Ballarat as it was the summer of 1853–54* 1884 by Eugene von Guérard and *The sesquicentennial view of Ballarat* 2004 by Terry Kelly were created 150 years apart and clearly document how the landscape and the township have changed over time. Imagine you return to Ballarat or your home town in the year 2146. Create an artwork which predicts what Ballarat or your home town will look like 150 years into the future. Experiment with mixed media and collage techniques to produce your futuristic landscape.

Activity 6, VCE Art and Studio Art: Visual Language.

Discuss how Eugene von Guérard has created a sense of awe in the painting of Tower Hill. How does he capture a sense of the romantic and the sublime in the Australian colonial landscape?

Activity 6, VCE Art, Unit 4, AOS 1

Discuss the impact which *Tower Hill* 1855 by von Guérard had on the revegetation of the Tower Hill landscape. What is the role of the artist in contemporary society in relation to raising environmental issues and the impact of urbanisation?

Beyond the Classroom

Visit the Art Gallery of Ballarat to view the Eugene von Guérard works held in the collection.

Explore the Tower Hill Reserve to conduct a field study of the Tower Hill revegetation project.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN VICTORIA: INDIGENOUS LIFE PRE-COLONISATION

Before colonisation, Indigenous Australians lived symbiotically with the land for at least 40,000, and possibly up to 100,000, years. Within Victoria, there were over thirty different language groups. Within each language group there were different clans. Each clan took responsibilities for a section of the language group's land. Clan groups of around 100 people were governed by complex cultural structures, spiritual beliefs and totems. Prior to colonisation, the clans of central and western Victoria lived semi-nomadic lives, hunting, fishing and gathering food. Communities such as the Djab wurrung developed a complex system to trap eels during migration at Lake Bolac. Trading routes were established and there is evidence of trading between communities to the north and west of the Victorian border. This

complex and spiritual society lived harmoniously with the Victorian landscape for approximately 40,000 years.

In 1834, the first permanent European settlement was established in Portland, and by 1835 John Batman founded the community of Melbourne.

European colonisation had a devastating impact on the Indigenous people of Australia. Before colonisation, there were an estimated 20,000 to 60,000 people living in Victoria, but the arrival of Europeans in the early 1830s caused a rapid decline in the population. Bloody violence and the loss of land and way of life, along with diseases such as smallpox took a dramatic toll on the Indigenous population.



Eugene von Guérard
My My by Geelong 22 ap. 1854. West Seite v. Barwon
[Mia mia near Geelong, west side of the Barwon]
22 April 1854
Pictures collection, State Library Victoria Purchased 1903

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN VICTORIA: EARLY DEPICTIONS AFTER COLONISATION

When von Guérard arrived in 1852, only eighteen years had passed since the first Europeans had settled in Victoria. Although only a short period had passed, the impact of European ideologies, technologies and traditions on the Indigenous people of Victoria was evident. Through his travels, von Guérard captured depictions both of Indigenous people attempting to live traditional lives, as well as the impact of European presence.

December 31st 1852

Saw a number of Aborigines, both men and woman, some clad in opossum rugs and others in European attire.

January 11th 1853

Descending the hill, we came to the little village of Batesford, consisting of two public houses, a couple of small stores, a smithy and a few huts. We crossed the Moorabool by a very unsound wooden bridge, passed a group of three or four mia-mias, the abode of some eight or ten Aborigines. In front of each burned a little fire, and some spears lay at hand. The mia-mias are made of the branches of trees in the form of half an open umbrella of large dimensions. Some were covered with the skins of animals.

The painting, *Aborigines met on the road to the diggings*, 1854, depicts the trade of a possum skin cloak between local Indigenous people and two miners on their way to the Ballarat goldfields. Trade was an important aspect of the social structure of Indigenous people in Victoria. The trade of possum skin rugs and cloaks between Indigenous Victorians and miners was a regular occurrence during the early gold rush era. The well-made possum skin products provided miners with warmth and the Indigenous people with food staples and supplies such as tea, flour and well as money to buy clothing, footwear, and in some instances, horses.

The Wadawurrung people are the traditional owners of the land that covers the area from Werribee, Queenscliff and Airey's Inlet in the south-east to Beaufort in the north-west and Cressy in the south. The language border was marked by the Werribee River to the north-east, the Barwon River, Warrambine Creek and Ferres Creek to the south and Mount Emu Creek and Fiery Creek to the west. The Wadawurrung people are part of the Kulin nation, along with the Woiwurrung, Boonerwung, Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung communities. The Wadawurrung



Eugene von Guérard
Aborigines met on the road to the diggings 1854
Geelong Gallery.
Gift of W. Max Bell and Norman Belcher, 1923.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN VICTORIA: THE WADAWURRUNG PEOPLE



Eugene von Guérard
Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat 1854
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 1977

language was spoken by eight large clans who lived within the language border. Ballarat, the site of the gold rush, sits on Wadawurrung land.

Before European settlement, the Wadawurrung people lived complex social and spiritual lives. They moved freely throughout their country. Its diverse landscape offered a varied and plentiful food supply. They hunted animals such as kangaroo on the vast grass plains and fished from the sea and rivers, managing the waterways to ensure over-fishing didn't occur. Wadawurrung people lived in agreement with the neighbouring language groups including the Gulidjan, Djab wurrung, Dauwurd wurrung, Girai wurrung and Djargurd wurrung, and participated in ceremonies with them, including the annual early autumn eel migration at Lake Bolac.

In 1854, von Guérard painted a depiction of Wadawurrung life. *Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat 1854* was painted in his Melbourne studio from a sketch made on the fifth of February 1854. Von Guérard described his impressions of the area on an earlier excursion:

March 13th 1853

Have done a wonderful walk to Warrenheip Hill, through miles of forest. Saw many magpies, black cockatoos, parrots, etc. Much relished the exquisite clear water of Leigh creek, the first I had tasted for a long time, such a thing being unobtainable at the diggings.

The Wadawurrung people depicted in *Warrenheip Hills near Ballarat 1854*, are most likely an imagined element added to the scene. The painting evokes the lifestyle of the people and the landscape as it would have been prior to European settlement. The fertile soils of the inactive scoria volcanic cone supported rich vegetation and animal life which the artist documented on his wandering through the area. The name Mount Warrenheip is derived from the Wadawurrung word *warrengEEP* meaning emu feathers, so called because of the ruffle of bracken ferns that once covered the mountain. This area was the traditional land of the members of the Tooloora baluk clan, who inhabited the area around Mount Warrenheip and Lal Lal Creek.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN VICTORIA: WADAWURRUNG AND THE GOLD RUSH

The goldrush brought prosperity to the colony of Victoria. The rapid growth of the economy had an irreversible effect on both the landscape and Wadawurrung culture. To survive, Indigenous Victorians had to adapt to European ways. During the gold rush period, the Wadawurrung people adopted many roles undertaken by European settlers and miners. They were also instrumental in the discovery of gold.

Native Police Corps

Indigenous people were employed as part of the Native Police Corps, helping law enforcement officers to track down criminals such as bushrangers. Between 1851 and October 1852, members of the Native Police Corps were present on Victorian goldfields and were the first police presence at the Ballarat diggings. The role of the Native Police was to check gold licences, patrol new finds, guard the sites and escort gold shipments.

Guides

Many squatters and miners relied on the local knowledge of Indigenous people. Hiring an Indigenous guide enabled Europeans to traverse the Victorian terrain safely. Guides would follow traditional trading routes using the native wells for clean water. Guides would lead miners to the goldfields and were often instrumental in the discovery of new gold deposits.

Fossicking

Before colonisation and the gold rush, Indigenous Victorian quarried for crystal, greenstone, sandstone, obsidian, kaolin, ochres and basalt across Victoria. Although they did not value gold in the way European and migrant miners, the Wadawurrung people quickly understood its economic worth. Many Indigenous people participated in some capacity, in the mining and fossicking for gold. Indigenous Victorians including the Wadawurrung people were instrumental in the discovery of new gold deposits and finds such as the lucrative Eureka diggings.

Trade

Due to the desirability of gold for Europeans, Indigenous groups such as the Wadawurrung used gold as a currency for trade. The trading of gold between

Wadawurrung and European shepherds began even before the onslaught of the gold rush. Gold was traded for food staples such as tea, sugar, flour and beef and was converted to currency to purchase more substantial commodities such as clothing.

Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade

In her post-colonial work *Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade* 2014, Wadawurrung artist Aunty Marlene Gilson addresses the role of the Wadawurrung people during the early years at the Ballarat diggings, a depiction that has typically been excluded from European accounts of this time, while borrowing compositional elements of von Guérard's *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–54*. She has adapted von Guérard's panoramic view with Mount Warrenheip in the background and reworked compositional features including the large circular stockade which mirrors the circus tent in von Guérard's painting. To further address the role of the Wadawurrung people during the gold rush, Gilson has included figures carrying out the roles that many Indigenous people had during this time, including serving in the Native Police Corps, mining, and fossicking and caring for miner's children — it is believed that Wadawurrung woman cared for the children of the miners during the Eureka Stockade in 1854.



Marlene Gilson

Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade 2014

Purchased with funds from The Sir Wilfred Brookes Charitable Foundation, 2014

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE IN VICTORIA

Activity 4, VCE Studio Art: Historical and Cultural Context

VCE Art: Cultural Framework, Contemporary Framework

Aunty Marlene Gilson painted the work *Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade* 2014 as a postcolonial response to colonial representations of history. Research postcolonialism and the art practice of Marlene Gilson and discuss the historical and cultural factors that influenced the painting *Surviving on the Goldfields* 2014.

Activity 6, VCE Art, Unit 4, AOS 1

Compare *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–54* 1884 by Eugene von Guérard and *Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade* 2014. Discuss how Gilson has addressed the historical accuracy of Aboriginal involvement during the gold rush. Why is Gilson's postcolonial perspective an important addition to Australian art history and Australia's history as a whole? How are the issues of colonial and contemporary perceptions of indigenous Australians addressed through the creation of *Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade* 2014.

Activity 5, Visual Arts 3–10, Respond and interpret

Compare *Old Ballarat as it was in the summer of 1853–54* 1884 by Eugene von Guérard and *Mt Warrenheip and Eureka Stockade* 2014 by Aunty Marlene Gilson. Compare how each artist has depicted the Ballarat goldfields, including the depiction of the landscape and the representation of Indigenous Victorians. What cultural and historical factor have influenced each artist's depiction? How does each image address the history of the Ballarat goldrush?

Activity 1, History 3–9, Cause and Effect

Using images from the Eugene von Guérard: Artist–traveller Education Kit, create an annotated comparison between a European miner and a person from the Wadawurrung clan. Discuss the gold rush: perceptions of land and land management, the effects the gold rush had on Wadawurrung culture and on Australia as a nation.

Activity 3, History 3–9, Historical sources of evidence

In pairs, develop a roleplay script between Eugene von Guérard and a Wadawurrung person, exploring each of the character's experiences and perspectives of the gold rush. Use primary and secondary resources in the *Eugene von Guérard: Artist–traveller Education Kit* to inform your roleplay. Present your roleplay to the class group.

Activity 3, Geography 3–9, Geographical knowledge.

Research Lal Lal Falls depicted in von Guérard's image *Fall of the Lallal creek, 112 feet high, branch of the Moorool near Buninyong* 1858. Discuss why you believe he chose to capture the image? Why would this landscape have appealed to him? Compare von Guérard's colonial European view of this landscape with that of the traditional owners the Wadawurrung people. How have each group's views influenced the protection and use of Lal Lal falls over time?

Beyond the Classroom

Visit the Art Gallery of Ballarat to view the works of Eugene von Guérard and Aunty Marlene Gilson held in the Art Gallery of Ballarat collection.

Visit the Art Gallery of Ballarat and participate in the Bunjil Murrup program to learn more about Wadawurrung culture and tradition.

Arrange an excursion to Lal Lal Falls to undertake a sketching tour or geographical survey.

PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE

Lal Lal Falls is a place of great cultural significance for the Wadawurrung people, as it is said to be the final resting place for Bunjil the wedged-tailed eagle, who is the creator spirit in Wadawurrung mythology. *Lal Lal fall. Freitag 29 Feb. 1856* was created by von Guérard in 1858 from an earlier 1854 sketch. The artist eloquently

captures the spirituality and grandeur before him through the vast expanse of the composition and the geographical detailing of the basalt landscape, clearly illustrating the majestic force of nature as it cuts through the volcanic landscape.



Eugene von Guérard
Lal Lal fall. Freitag 29 Feb. 1856 1856
folio 4, 'Station Peak, Geelong, 1855'
State Library of NSW

INSPIRED BY VON GUÉRARD

Imants Tillers

Model of reality 1988

Purchased with the funds from the Collin Hicks Caldwell Bequest Fund, 1992



Von Guérard's practice has inspired the work of many contemporary artists including those who appreciate the subject matter, stylistic features and process of his practice. Artists such as Aunty Marlene Gilson and Imants Tillers have borrowed or appropriated conceptual and compositional elements of von Guérard's painting to address post-colonial issues and contemporary depictions and issues surrounding the Australian landscape.

Imants Tillers (b. 1950) is a contemporary Australian artist with Latvian heritage. His work is heavily bound in Postmodernist theory, with appropriation being central to his practice. By appropriating historical and cultural artworks and cultural references, Tillers questions origins and identity. *Model of Reality* 1988, is an appropriation of von Guérard's *Bushfire* 1859 image. Drawn to the sublime nature of von Guérard's image, Tillers was driven to intensify the terror and violence of the natural landscape by enlarging the image to a monumental scale. The image was reproduced from a poor-quality colour reproduction, and the poor quality of the print heightened the contrast between the foreground and the ominous scene of the raging bushfire. Along with the enveloping nature of the colour and scale of the painting and the inclusion of the words 'ME HERE NOW', it invites the viewers to centre themselves within the image, almost becoming conscious participants in the scene. This position can be read as replicating the position of the colonial artist von Guérard, who inscribed the *Bushfire* painting with 'E.v. Guérard taken on the spot'.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

INSPIRED BY VON GUÉRARD

Activity 1, VCE Studio Art: Historical and Cultural Context, Ideas and styles in artworks

VCE Art: Cultural Framework, Contemporary Framework

Research Eugene von Guérard and Imants Tillers and explain how each artist is influenced by their heritage. How does their influence their art practice?

Compare *Bushfire* 1859 by Eugene von Guérard with *Model of Reality* 1988 by Imants Tillers. How does Tillers's appropriation of von Guérard's artwork alter the meaning of the image? What message is Tillers trying to convey to the viewer and how is he achieving this? What are the legal and moral obligation of Imants Tillers when appropriating the work of von Guérard?

Activity 2, Visual Arts 3–10, Respond and interpret

Research the practice of Imants Tillers. Explain how he borrows images from other artists to change the meaning and message of an artwork. What aspects has he borrowed from *Bushfire* 1859 by Eugene von Guérard to create *Model of Reality* 1988? What aspects has Tiller kept the same and what has he changed? How has he changed the image? What meaning is Tillers trying to communicate to the viewer? As a viewer how would you interpret the words, 'ME HERE NOW'?

Activity 3, Visual Art 3–10, Explore and express ideas, Visual Arts Practices

Appropriate one of von Guérard artworks. What message or meaning do you want to communicate with the viewer: you might want to reflect how the landscape has been changed or altered over time, environmental concerns, a historical event or the viewers relationship with the image. Alter the artwork to communicate your meaning or message: you can achieve this by changing the scale or the colours of the artwork, by adding or subtracting objects and figures, by adding text, or by using a different material or technique to create the artwork. Write a statement explaining how you have appropriated one of von Guérard's artworks to communicate a different meaning or message.

Beyond the Classroom

Visit the Art Gallery of Ballarat to view the works of Eugene von Guérard and Imants Tillers held in the Art Gallery of Ballarat collection.

RESOURCES

The State Library of NSW von Guérard sketchbook image collection

<http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/results>

Fred Cahir *Black Gold: Aboriginal people on the Goldfields of Victoria 1850–1870*

<https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/aboriginal-history-monographs/black-gold>

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