

# Who is Ben Quilty?

One of the country's leading contemporary artists, Ben Quilty was born in 1973 and grew up in north-west Sydney. He completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts (painting) at Sydney College for the Arts, Aboriginal Culture and History at Monash University and Visual Communication at the University of Western Sydney. Quilty is known for his inventiveness with paint through his thick oil paint portraits and his investigations into Australian identity.

In 2002 he was awarded the Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship which took him to Paris on a 3-month residency at Cité Internationale des Arts. Quilty began to paint full time and reflected on the suburban male psyche and rites of passage.

## Teacher notes



photo: Daniel Boud

### **Please note**

This resource and some works of art in the exhibition deal with issues relating to asylum seekers, mental health and suicide.

## Who is Ben Quilty? (Continued)

In 2011 Quilty was awarded the Archibald Prize for his portrait of painter Margaret Olley. During the same year he was commissioned as an official war artist with the Australian War Memorial, where he travelled to Afghanistan, spending three weeks in Kabul, Kandahar and Tarin Kowt. Upon his return, he created *After Afghanistan* a series of twenty-one portraits and abstract landscapes, which challenged the traditional representations of Australian soldiers. He painted them bearing the wounds of war, reminding us with swathes of bruised paint of its pointlessness.

## Teacher notes

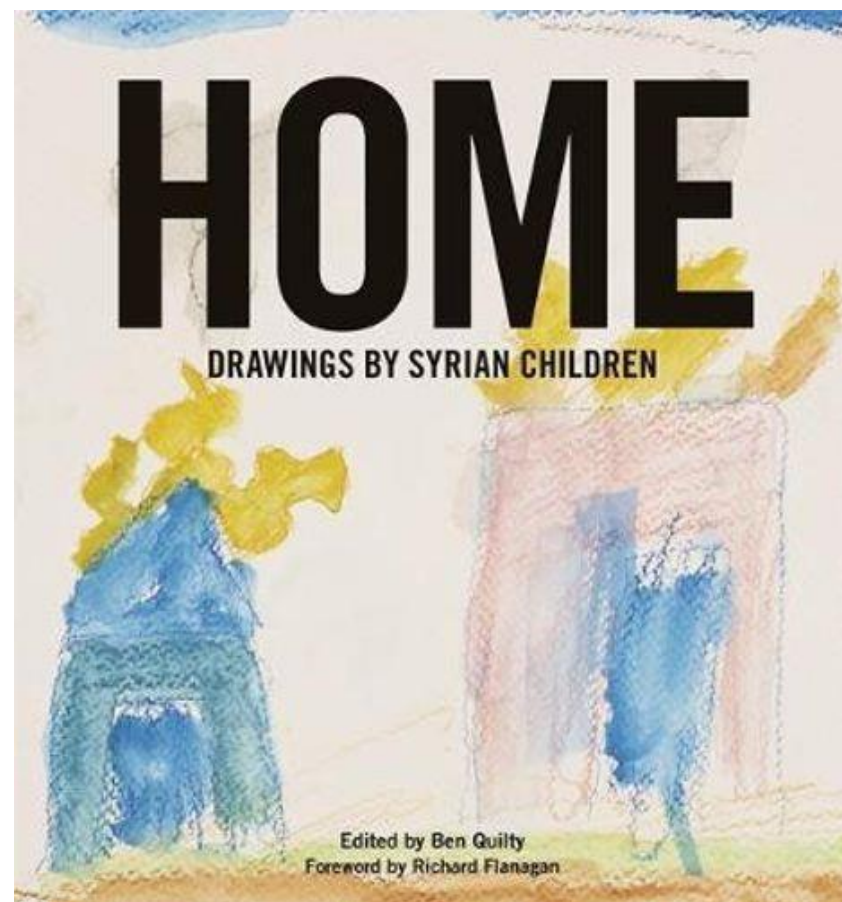


Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *Margaret Olley*, 2011, Southern Highlands, New South Wales, oil on linen, 170.0 x 150.0 cm; Private collection, Courtesy the artist, photo: Mim Stirling.

## Who is Ben Quilty? (Continued)

Today Quilty is a visible and vocal critical citizen. He is committed to art's capacity to make change, and to that end he was invited in 2016 by World Vision to go to Lebanon, Syria and Greece to experience first-hand the exodus of Syrian refugees. Painting with muscularity and meaning is one way that he makes sense of the here and now. In his words, 'my work is about working out how to live in this world, it's about compassion and empathy but also anger and resistance'.

## Teacher notes



Front cover of *Home*, edited by Ben Quilty



## Did you know?

## Teacher notes

When Ben Quilty was 17, a triptych he created was selected for [ARTEXPRESS](#), an annual exhibition of the best work from Year 12 students in New South Wales. To see his painting [click here](#).

‘All children can draw, the harder you work at it the better you are at it’

Ben Quilty, NGA, Canberra, 2019

### REMEMBER

There could be a young Ben Quilty (in the making) in your class.



School photo of Ben Quilty from primary school

## About the exhibition

*Quilty* is the first major survey exhibition of Ben Quilty and has been developed by the Art Gallery of South Australia and curated by Artistic Director, Artistic Programs Lisa Slade.

The exhibition extends from Quilty's early reflections on the initiation rituals performed by young Australian men to his experience as an official war artist in Afghanistan. The exhibition also includes Quilty's most recent works which continue the examination of masculinity that began more than twenty years ago with his muscular paintings exploring the rituals of mateship. The figure of Santa Claus stands as an emblem of flawed masculinity. His colossal canvasses titled *The Last Supper* began with sittings by life models, but figuration duels with abstraction. Here the painter becomes pugilist, with each lashing of viscous paint dealing the body of the canvas a visceral blow.

## Teacher notes



Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *Self-portrait after Afghanistan*, 2012, Southern Highlands, New South Wales, oil on linen, 130.0 x 120.0 cm; Private collection, Sydney, Courtesy the artist, photo: Mim Stirling.

## About the exhibition

In the words of art critic John McDonald, 'Quilty's radical humanism has lured him outside the sedate spaces of the art gallery into war zones, refugee camps, and the Bali prison where Myuran Sukumaran and Andrew Chan were executed. Not many of us would willingly undertake such journeys, which reveal Quilty's compassion for the victim, and his determination to use his skills (and an increasingly high profile) to make a difference.'

'Through my work I hope to push compassion to the front of national debate.' - Ben Quilty

### Touring Dates

Art Gallery of South Australia | 2 March – 2 June 2019

Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art | 29 Jun - 13 Oct 2019

Art Gallery of New South Wales | 9 Nov 2019 - 2 Feb 2020

## Teacher notes



Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *New Bird*, 2017, Southern Highlands, New South Wales, oil on linen, 80.0 x 70.0 cm; Private collection, Courtesy the artist, photo: Mim Stirling.



## About this resource

This resource has been designed to complement classroom learning before and after a visit to *Quilty*. Some slides will include extended information about works of art as well as suggested making and responding activities which are outlined in the notes panel.

As outlined in 'Painting the Tangle' by Justin Paton in the *Quilty* book which accompanies the exhibition:

Leo Steinberg said 'the way to respond to a new artwork was not to give it a grade (good, bad, middling...) or rush it towards a category or position (abstract, figurative, conceptual...). Rather we should feel along with it as with a thing that is like no other'

## Teacher notes



Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *The lot*, 2006, Bowral, New South Wales, oil on canvas, 150.0 x 160.0 cm; Gift of Ben Quilty through the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors 2016. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist.



## Before your visit

Introduce your students to Ben Quilty by watching video 'Paint plus speed equals portrait' by ABC Education. Provide your students with some information about Ben Quilty and his practice prior to your arrival.

<https://ab.co/2SphWYT>

## During your visit

We recommend prioritising long looking when viewing works of art in the exhibition, engaging your students through open ended questioning where all students have the opportunity to contribute to group discussion.



Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *Evening shadows, Rorschach after Johnstone*, 2011, Robertson, New South Wales, oil on linen, eight panels, 115 x 175 cm (each panel), 230 x 702 cm (overall) Gift of Ben Quilty through the Art Gallery of South Australia Contemporary Collectors to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Contemporary Collectors 2013. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist



# Resources

## ***Follow***

@benquilty on Instagram

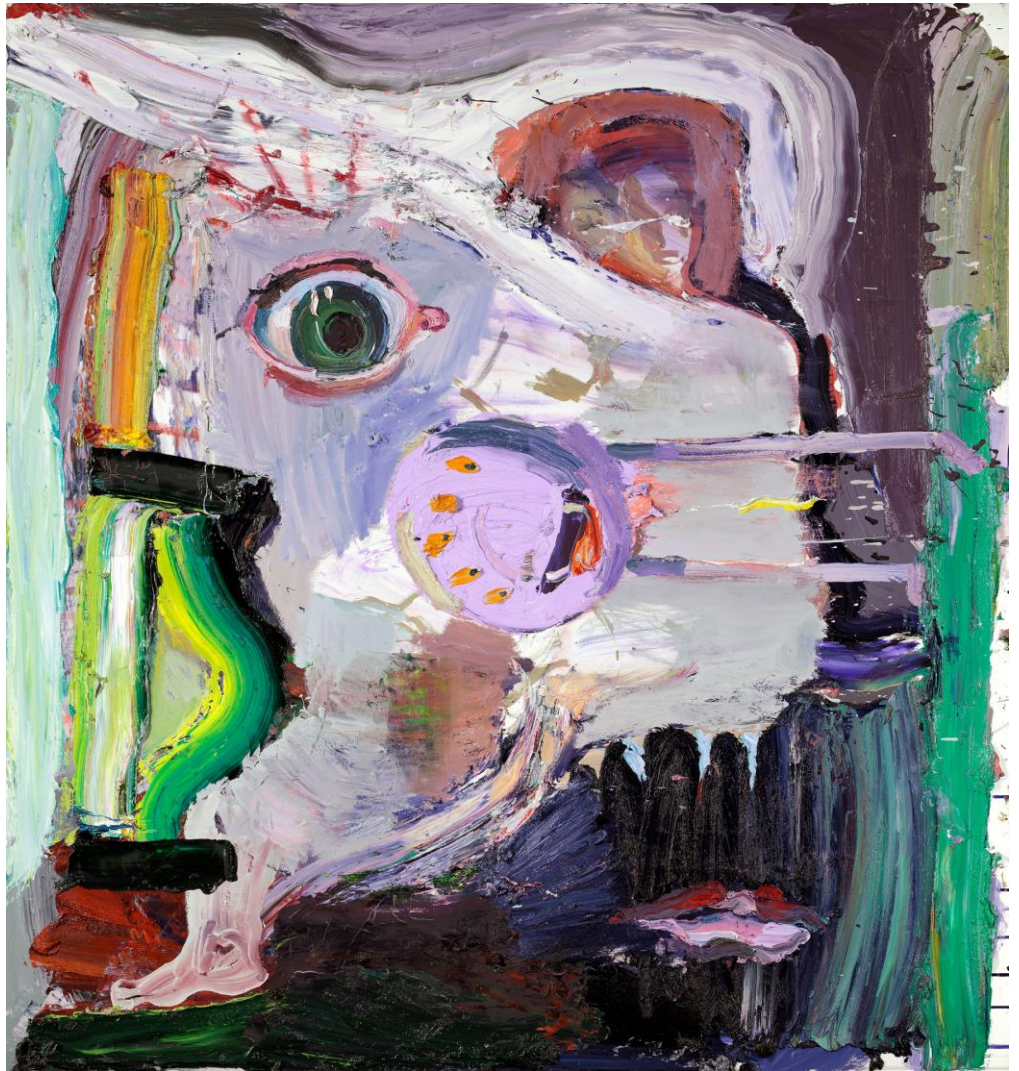
## **Books and catalogues**

Quilty, B (editor), *Home*, Drawings by Syrian Children, Penguin Random House Australia, 2018

*Quilty* catalogue, Penguin Random House, Australia, 2019

Slade, L, *Ben Quilty*, University of Queensland Art Museum, 2009

Webster, L, *Quilty*, Australian War Memorial, 2014



Ben Quilty, Australia, born 1973, *The blue pill (explain the world)*, 2016, Southern Highlands, New South Wales, oil on linen, 183.0 x 173.0 cm (overall); Private Collection, Courtesy the artist.

## Articles

AGNSW - The Art that made me: Ben Quilty

<https://bit.ly/2GifBJ2>

The Conversation - Two artists go to war

<https://bit.ly/2SJLNlf>

The Conversation - Ben Quilty at the Saatchi Gallery ... things just got interesting

<https://bit.ly/1qI0ZCF>

The Guardian: Ben Quilty transforms St Paul's Cathedral's Christmas tree into refugee

<https://bit.ly/2I23zFe>

The Guardian – Colonial Frontier Massacres <http://bit.ly/2BRTMwm>

InDaily – Painting with Purpose

<https://bit.ly/2N8gpR1>

Queensland University - Ben Quilty

<https://bit.ly/2TEZdW1>

Sydney Morning Herald: Ben Quilty and his campaign to save Myuran Sukumaran

<https://bit.ly/2SIP1VJ>

Sydney Morning Herald - Ben Quilty: It's time to acknowledge our colonial terrorism

<https://bit.ly/2tfCe8a>

Sydney Morning Herald – Quilty (John McDonald)

<http://bit.ly/2Y9rl6n>

Sydney Morning Herald – Artist Ben Quilty confronts colonial denial with Aboriginal site artworks

<https://bit.ly/2SLboUR>

## Education Resources

Lake Macquarie

<https://bit.ly/2WQ4xI2>

Australian War Memorial

<https://bit.ly/2GCeH9D>



# Videos

ABC Education - Paint plus speed equals portrait

<https://ab.co/2SphWYT>

ABC News - Ben Quilty tells 7.30 it was hard saying goodbye to Myuran Sukumara

<https://bit.ly/2DsfypU>

ABC News - Archibald winner Ben Quilty critiques Santa and straight white men at Sydney Contemporary art fair

<https://ab.co/2SHqjhG>

ABC - Sacred Space

<https://ab.co/2Dk9NdX>

AGNSW Afterhours Ben Quilty with Scott Bevan, The role of the artist at war.

<https://bit.ly/2SiayyB>

ANU – Art Forum: Ben Quilty

<https://bit.ly/2SK8b7e>

Ben Quilty After Afghanistan

<https://bit.ly/2qsSwvX>

Ben Quilty: Interview at Saatchi Gallery

<https://bit.ly/2RNIOxH>

Ben Quilty and The Maggots

<https://bit.ly/1UzDKuI>

Ben Quilty Live with Lisa Slade (Queensland University)

<https://bit.ly/2tdtDCY>

Ben Quilty in conversation with Margaret Olley

<https://bit.ly/2WRjyt7>

Ben Quilty reflects on his practice and his place in painting

<https://bit.ly/2MXazIA>

'Every single child draws the truth': Ben Quilty and Richard Flanagan on the refugee crisis

<https://bit.ly/2I1Dt5d>

Kit Messham-Muir: Interview with Ben Quilty, artist, Robertson, Australia, 26 January 2013

<https://bit.ly/2RPWAyA>

## SoundCloud

Art Gallery of South Australia - Panel Discussion:  
Ben Quilty, Richard Flanagan, Conny Lenneberg,  
Ralph Boydoun

<https://bit.ly/2GxxOI5>

Art Gallery of New South Wales – Ben Quilty on  
'When silence falls'

<https://bit.ly/2UJ0viG>

Art Gallery of New South Wales – Quiet riot 2: Ben  
Quilty with Simone Marnie

<https://bit.ly/2SBNqKN>

Drawing the Line - Capture Podcast

<https://bit.ly/2GxxHpF>

The Good Reading Podcast – Ben Quilty on the  
book that should be in every school, lounge room  
and the library

<https://bit.ly/2UPOZ54>

UQ Art Museum – Lisa Slade and Gillian Ridsdale:  
'Ben Quilty Live!'

<https://bit.ly/2l0tA80>

Walkley Talks

Framing War Andrew and Ben Quilty Talk  
with Jennifer Byrne

<https://bit.ly/2Sph9Hp>

**This resource has been developed by Kylie  
Neagle, Education Officer and Dr. Lisa Slade  
from AGSA in collaboration with the Art  
Gallery of New South Wales and QAGOMA.**