

# Keys to the collection— Stories

## Juan Davila

“For him, art doesn’t just offer imaginary or symbolic resolutions to real problems, but is itself a practice of freedom, even if that freedom can look pretty weird or unpleasant from the outside.”

—Justin Clemens, *Haranguing the Nation*, The Monthly Magazine, 2007

**1946** Born in Santiago, Chile.

**1951–63** Studied at Colegio del Verbo Divino.

**1965–69** Trained as a lawyer at the University of Chile.

**1970–72** Studied at the Fine Arts School of the University of Chile.

**1974** Exhibited in Chile.

**1974** Moved to Melbourne (following the Pinochet coup in 1973.)

**1983** Exhibited in various Australian and international galleries for example Art Gallery of New South Wales.

**Editor** of the *Art and Criticism Monograph* series in Melbourne.



### The bush burial—

Juan Davila’s paintings are not relaxing or peaceful. They make us think about events that are happening in our society and issues of concern to us all.

In painting this work, Juan Davila was inspired by Frederick McCubbin’s painting *A bush burial*. However, McCubbin’s work of art was completed over 100 years earlier in 1890. In his work, McCubbin tells the story of the first settlers in Australia who lived hard lives and suffered great losses. Davila’s painting tells a story of new settlers in Australia, of refugees coming to Australia. They too have lived hard lives and suffered great losses and Davila wants us to think of these things.

**Geelong  
Gallery**

AusVELS level 2 to 6

[geelonggallery.org.au/learn](http://geelonggallery.org.au/learn)

Juan Davila  
*A bush burial* 2000  
oil on canvas  
Collection: Geelong Gallery

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E E L O N G  
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## Juan Davila

born Chile 1946;  
arrived Australia 1972

*A bush burial* 2000

oil on canvas

200.0 x 260.0 cm

Collection: Geelong Gallery  
Gift of the Helen Mcpherson  
Smith Trust and the Geelong  
Gallery Foundation, 2001

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### Question

Look at Juan Davila's painting *A bush burial* (2000) and Frederick McCubbin's *A bush burial* (1890). Which one do you like best? Give reasons for your choice.

### Research

Investigate Davila's *A bush burial* and list all the things you can see in this painting. From these clues, work out what you think is happening and what the painting means.

### Activity

Create a cartoon that deals with a new start in a foreign land. It might be any country or any time and may be about anything that can happen to a person in the course of such a big event. Or, create a cartoon that tells a story about Indigenous people losing their place in their own land. Think about the feelings and emotions these events might bring arouse.