

## Colour, texture and scent bring art class to life

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The Bella Room is unlike any other classroom you have seen. Soft sculptural forms hang from the ceiling and shagpile carpets the walls.

The predominant colour is green, which artist Hiromi Tango, who was commissioned to create an environment for students with intellectual disabilities, describes as "calming yet stimulating".

"But the yellow centre is like a dance stage or could be the sun," the artist says.

Tango's *Dance*, inside the National Centre for Creative Learning at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, features touch screens, fragrances such as lavender, and plush forms of yarn and fabric designed to evoke a sense of security.

The artist says bright colours and varied textures activate different parts of the brain, while the cocooning effect of an immersive installation creates a sense of security. MCA head of creative learning Heather Whitely Robertson says the brief was to create a work that encouraged sensory and tactile engagement with art.



Touching: Hiromi Tango's *Dance* has created a stimulating but secure space to explore art and ideas. Photo: Janie Barrett

"The Bella Room is part of our broader access program," she says. "We believe contemporary art should be accessible to everyone."

The \$53 million Mordant Wing, which opened a year ago, might have hogged the limelight but initiatives such as the Bella Room hint at the gallery's future.

Its new wing has been a key factor in almost doubling visitor numbers, but director Liz Ann McGregor says: "The museum is not the building. The museum is the hub. The museum is the programs, it's the relationships, it's the networks we build.

"Whenever you reopen after you've been closed, you're bound to get a bounce. I'm not saying we will stay at a million [visitors] indefinitely."