



William Barak
Australian (Wurundjeri), 1824–1903
Figures in Possum Skin Cloaks, 1898
pencil, wash, charcoal solution, gouache and earth pigments on paper
57.0 × 88.8 cm (image and sheet)
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased 1962 (1215A-5)

5

STYLES AND IDEAS

Across history and in many different cultures, artists have been inspired and influenced by a wide range of ideas and artistic styles.

This chapter investigates some significant styles and ideas. It explores art as an expression of culture, art as social commentary, connections between art and science, new art inspired by old art, realism and abstraction, art about ideas, and art and beauty.

How and why artists explore particular styles and ideas is influenced by artists' personal experiences and beliefs. The historical, cultural and social contexts in which artists work are also influential. Exploring the style or ideas in an artwork reveals clues that helps understand the artwork.

Learn about:

- styles and ideas in art
- how art can be influenced and inspired by artists' personal experiences and beliefs, and by their historical, cultural or social context.

Learn by:

- comparing, analysing, evaluating and interpreting artworks
- discussing and communicating ideas and opinions about art
- creating your own artwork.

EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURE

5.1

ART FROM THE DREAMING

In Australia's Indigenous culture, artworks, including the visual arts, song and dance, play an important role in communicating Dreaming knowledge and lore. Many artworks are inspired by creator spirits and their activities.



The Kimberley

As a result of colonisation, many Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal people were displaced from their ancestral lands, making it difficult for them to maintain their Wanjina images.

In 2003, they were successful in gaining native title rights to a significant area of land in the Kimberley. The judgement specifically recognised the importance of rituals associated with rock sites.

The Dreaming

The **Dreaming** is central to Indigenous culture. It embodies the past, present and future, and it permeates every aspect of life.

The Dreaming includes creation stories that tell how the spirit ancestors emerged from a dark, formless earth at the beginning of time. During their epic journeys, they created and named all the physical features of the landscape. They also created the knowledge and lore that govern social and religious customs and behaviour and help people live harmoniously with each other, living things and the environment.

The spirit ancestors eventually returned to the supernatural world below the earth; however, their power lives on in many features of the universe, including the land. This is the basis of the deep reverence for the land in Indigenous culture.

Many Indigenous cultures

Before European settlement, there were hundreds of separate Indigenous language groups, each with their own cultural traditions dating back at least 40 000 years. Ideas and traditions have been shared between many Indigenous groups over time; however, even today, the diversity of Indigenous languages and cultures across Australia is not unlike the diversity of cultures and languages found when travelling across different countries in Europe.

Wanjina of the Kimberley

The Wanjina are the supreme spirit beings of the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal peoples of the north-west and central Kimberley. According to tradition, the Wanjina came out of the sea and sky and created the world and all that it contains. The Wanjina control the natural elements and are associated with the life-giving properties of water.

After they had finished their work, the Wanjina disappeared into caves and rock shelters, leaving behind their images on the walls. These images are a sacred and significant link to the creation period. As the human descendants of the Wanjina, the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal peoples are responsible for looking after the images. Regular repainting helps ensure seasonal rains and the ongoing fertility of the land and its species.

In the mid-1970s, Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal artists began copying Wanjina images onto other surfaces, including bark, then later, board and canvas. Gradually, images of the Wanjina have been produced for a wider audience for commercial and educational reasons.

The large paintings on canvas of Wanjina by Woonambal artist **Alec Mingelmann** (c. 1910–1981) are made with natural **ochres**. The ochres suggest the colour and surface of rock paintings and are significant because they are made from the land created by the Wanjina. The colours of the ochres have their own symbolism; red is often seen as the symbol of blood, while white is associated with water.

The Wanjina are characterised by certain features. They are always seen from the front and appear still and solid. Wanjina can be portrayed as full-length or head-and-shoulder figures. Their round heads are surrounded by a halo-like shape that often has a pattern of radiating lines. The lines are commonly associated with lightning, which the Wanjina control. Their faces are dominated by large, black eyes, usually close together, and a beak-like nose, but the Wanjina do not have mouths. Some people believe the Wanjina once had mouths, but they were shut so tightly after the first lightning bolt struck that they have not been opened since. In some places, people believe that if the Wanjina had mouths, it would not stop raining.



Alec Mingelmanganu
 Australian (Woonambal), c. 1910–1981
Wanjina, 1980
 earth pigments and natural binder on canvas
 128.1 × 91.4 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Purchased from Admission Funds, 1990
 (0.156–1990)
 © Estate of the artist. Licensed by Aboriginal
 Artists Agency Ltd

Images of the Wanjina at rock art sites are up to 6 metres long.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about the culture of the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal peoples and Wanjina art from the Kimberley.

Mingelmanganu's Wanjina figures were inspired by cave paintings the artist saw near the Lawley River and have very distinctive, upward-curving shoulders. The Wanjina's body is covered with dots and dashes similar to body-painting designs. The designs seem to shimmer, conveying the spiritual power of the Wanjina.

1 In sentences or using an annotated diagram, suggest how Mingelmanganu communicated the power of the Wanjina in his artwork. Consider the:

- materials
- size of the work
- figure's physical characteristics
- figure's placement within the picture.

EXPLORE

What Indigenous language groups are associated with your area? Find out three facts about the history and culture of one local group.

DISCUSS

Since artists of the Worrorra, Ngarinyin and Woonambal peoples first started creating Wanjina images to share with wider audiences in the 1970s, Wanjina images have become well known. A Wanjina image was part of the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony in 2000.

Some depictions of Wanjina by artists who do not have the right to use the imagery have created controversy (pp. 204–5).

What differences are there between a rock art Wanjina in the Kimberley, the Wanjina by Mingelmanganu and a Wanjina at the Olympics opening ceremony? Consider the visual qualities, spiritual significance, purpose and intended audience of each.

EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURE

5.2

COMMUNICATING CULTURE

Art and artists play an important role in society in preserving and sharing culture and promoting cultural understanding.

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Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about three works commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria in 2011 to celebrate Barak.

Completed in 2015, a 31-storey apartment block in the city of Melbourne features a portrait of Barak. The balconies of the building's facade were designed to create a pattern of light and dark tones. When seen from a distance, the effect re-creates a historical photograph of Barak.



A cultural legacy

The Wurundjeri are the traditional owners of country that now includes the city of Melbourne.

Wurundjeri man **William Barak** (c. 1824–1903) saw enormous change in his lifetime, including the end of traditional tribal life. Barak was a young boy when John Batman (1801–1839) acquired Wurundjeri land by ‘treaty’. He attended a mission school for a short time and joined the Port Phillip District Native Police Corps before moving to the Aboriginal settlement at Coranderrk in 1863.

Barak became head man (*ngurungaeta*) of the Wurundjeri in 1874. He was an influential spokesman for his people and created a bridge between his culture and that of the settlers.

Most of Barak’s paintings were made in the 1880s and 1890s. He had an original painting style; he combined traditional materials such as charcoal and **ochres** with **gouache** and **watercolour paint**. His paintings create

a vivid picture of Wurundjeri culture. The repeated lines, shapes and colours in the two rows of men in *Figures in Possum Skin Cloaks* animate the composition and suggest a rhythmic ceremonial dance.

Possum-skin cloaks have both practical and cultural significance. The fur is worn on the inside for warmth, and the outside of the cloak is decorated with designs that are important markers of cultural identity.

1 How do you think Barak’s paintings have contributed to creating a bridge between his culture and the settlers’ culture in the past and now?

EXPLORE

Research contemporary artists who acknowledge Barak in their artwork. Identify one work that you find interesting and explain what interests you about it.

Sharing culture

John Mawurndjul (b. 1952) is recognised as one of the finest and most inventive bark painters in Arnhem Land (p. 22). Mawurndjul's paintings have played an important role in expressing and sharing Kuniñjku culture, and his art has reached wide audiences around the world.

The artist's interest in exploring new ways of working is evident when you compare *Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent at Dilebang* (p. 76) with *Mardayin* (2004). The earlier painting's composition is dominated by the iconic form of Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent, against a plain background. In *Mardayin* (2004), Mawurndjul has created what seems to be a more abstract composition of circles embedded in an irregular grid-like structure. Fine *rarrk*, which represents the skin and sacred power of Ngalyod in the earlier painting, is in *Mardayin* (2004) used to cover the entire surface of the painting.

Mardayin (2004) is one of a number of paintings Mawurndjul has made inspired by the Mardayin ceremony. Mawurndjul's Mardayin paintings are inspired by the **geometric rarrk**-filled designs that are painted on men's bodies for the Mardayin ceremony. The designs are like maps of country. The shifts in direction and tone in the *rarrk* pattern suggest contours and forms in the landscape. The circular shapes represent sacred and significant sites, including waterholes and billabongs where the Rainbow Serpent lives. The use of *rarrk* represents the presence of ancestral power.

- 2 Create an annotated copy of *Mardayin* (2004) and note where you can see evidence of:
 - irregular grid-like structure
 - circles
 - shifts in direction and tone in the *rarrk*.
- 3 In what way can *Mardayin* (2004) be considered a powerful expression of culture?



John Mawurndjul AM
Australian (Kuniñjku, eastern Kunwinjku people),
b. 1952
Mardayin, 2004
natural earth pigments on stringy-bark
188 × 85 cm
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 2005
© John Mawurndjul. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

EXPLORE

Mardayin (2004) was included in the inaugural National Indigenous Art Triennial exhibition in 2007. The exhibition theme and title was Culture Warriors.

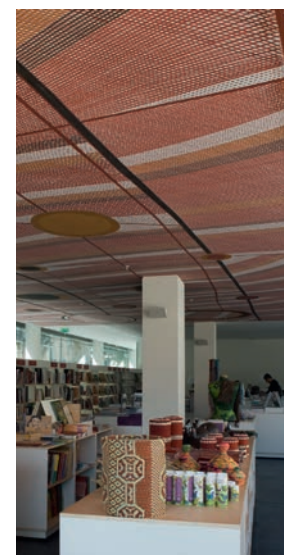
Curate your own class exhibition on the theme of Culture Warriors. Each student should select one artist to include in the exhibition. Find an image of one artwork by the artist and explain how the work fits the exhibition theme.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about three works commissioned by the National Gallery of Victoria in 2011 to celebrate Barak.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to the website of the Maningrida Arts Centre, where you can learn more about Mawurndjul and watch a video of the artist at work.



Musée du Quai Branly/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016. Photo: © Musée du quai Branly, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais/Nicolas Borel

Mawurndjul was one of eight Indigenous Australian artists commissioned to create work to be incorporated into the architecture of Musée du quai Branly, a museum that opened in Paris in 2006. The museum is dedicated to the indigenous art of cultures in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas.

The Mardayin ceremony was the first secret ceremony that Mawurndjul participated in, and it left a lasting impression on him. Mawurndjul has emphasised that what he paints for public display is inspired by sacred designs, but it is not the same.

EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURE

5.3

IMAGES OF A NATION

Many artworks express or explore ideas related to national identity.

Roberts was one of the main artists associated with the development of **Australian Impressionism** (p. 125). This group worked together, painting **en plein air** at artists' camps outside Melbourne during the 1880s; however, by 1890, a number of these artists, including Roberts, were working on large-scale paintings and searching for subjects of national significance beyond the suburban bush.

In the nineteenth century, wool production became the most important industry in the Australian economy. The industry reached a peak in the 1880s before crashing in the 1890s due to drought, falling wool prices and industrial unrest.

Rural life

Australian artist **Tom Roberts** (1856–1931) began work on *Shearing the Rams* in the spring of 1888, the year of Australia's centenary of European settlement. It was a time of intense **nationalism**, a time when people reflected on the history, achievements and character of the young nation and debated the need for artists and writers to focus on distinctly Australian subjects.

Although most people lived in cities, it was the bush and rural life that were widely seen as uniquely Australian. *Shearing the Rams* is a carefully composed image that celebrates the annual wool harvest, rural life and hard work.

Can you see how the boy on the left seems to lead you into the shearing shed? Other cues, including the line along the bent backs of the shearers, draw your attention through the shed where Roberts has described each stage of the shearing process. The composition creates an impression of an environment where everyone works together harmoniously. Do you notice that everyone

has a role appropriate for their age and physical ability?

The shearers are depicted as strong, skilful and noble characters. There is a particular focus on the shearer in the centre-front of the painting. His head is down, but his strong, muscular arms are emphasised. He maintains a firm pressure on the struggling ram while cutting away the thick fleece that spills across the floorboards.

For many viewers, *Shearing the Rams* embodies values and ideals – including mateship, fairness and hard work – that are an important part of Australian culture.

- 1 Explain in sentences, or using an annotated image, how Roberts has structured the composition of *Shearing the Rams* to:
 - direct the viewer's attention through the shearing shed
 - make the figure in the centre-front a focal point.
- 2 Explain whether you believe *Shearing the Rams* presents a realistic representation of working conditions in a shearing shed.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about how Roberts and his colleagues explored national themes in their art.

Tom Roberts
born Great Britain 1856,
arrived Australia 1869,
died 1931
Shearing the Rams,
1888–90
oil on canvas on
composition board
122.4 × 183.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1932 (4654–3)



- 3 What does *Shearing the Rams* communicate to you about the bush or bush life? How does the painting do this?
- 4 Why do you think that *Shearing the Rams* has been widely viewed as a distinctly Australian painting?
- 5 Do you think that the view of Australian life in *Shearing the Rams*:
 - is one that all Australians today can relate to
 - was one that all Australians could relate to when the painting was made?
 Explain why.

EXPLORE

Read some poetry or writing by Banjo Paterson (1864–1941) or Henry Lawson (1867–1922). What does it have in common with the art of Roberts?

A contemporary perspective

Fake Flag by Greek–Australian artist **Constanze Zikos** (b. 1962) presents the Australian flag as you have never seen it before. The familiar red, white and blue colours are nowhere to be seen. Instead, you see a mural-sized flag made using panels of fake wood-grain laminex, a material usually found in suburban kitchens.

Brightly coloured enamel spray paint and plastic, and metallic adhesive tape have been used to create decorative versions of the Union Jack, the seven-pointed Star of Federation (on the left) and the five stars of the Southern Cross. If you look carefully, you may notice that some of the stars have also taken on a new symbolic identity. Can you find the Star of David and the communist red star?

Zikos often uses forms and symbols that have cultural or national value in unexpected ways. By using materials that are part of our everyday lives, and by focusing on the decorative and symbolic possibilities of the flag, Zikos asks many questions about the flag as a national symbol. Why do we have flags? Do we understand the symbolism of the flag? Is the symbolism relevant to our lives today? Is it possible that Zikos's version of the flag is more relevant to our lives?



Zikos was born in Greece but grew up in the Australian suburbs, and his experiences of both cultures have informed his work.

- 6 What does fake wood-grain laminex remind you of or make you think about? Suggest why Zikos might have chosen this material to make an Australian flag.
- 7 Do you think the Australian flag is a worthwhile subject for an artist to explore? Why? Refer to *Fake Flag* and Jon Campbell's 'Yeah' Flag (p. 194).
- 8 How might the subject matter and materials of *Shearing the Rams* and *Fake Flag* reflect the times when each artwork was made?

DISCUSS

Use PMI charts to evaluate *Shearing the Rams* and *Fake Flag* as symbols of national identity. Which do you think is the most effective symbol of Australian identity today? Why?

DISCUSS

What ideas and objects are commonly associated with Australia's national identity? Have these changed since your grandparents' era? Do you think that these ideas and objects adequately represent the nation? Why?

Constanze Zikos
born Greece 1962, arrived
Australia 1966
Fake Flag, 1994
thermo-setting laminate,
enamel paint, crayon,
metallic and plastic
self-adhesive tape on
composition board
(a–h) 198.1 × 262.2 cm
(overall)
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased 1999
(1999.29.a–h)
© Constanze Zikos



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to read a discussion of national themes in art.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see other work by Zikos in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria.

EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURE

5.4

A BUDDHIST IMAGE OF COMPASSION

Images of important Buddhist figures reflect Buddhist ideals and virtues.

Buddhism is the fastest growing religion in Australia.

In China, Avalokitesvara is known as Kuan Yin (also Guan Yin and Kwan Yin). He is known in Japan as Kannon and in Vietnam as Quan Âm.

The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet, is believed to be a contemporary manifestation of Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion.

Buddhism

Buddhism developed in India more than 2500 years ago before gradually spreading through Asia. Today, Buddhism has followers worldwide, and it has evolved over

time and in the different places it has been adopted.

Buddhism is based on the teachings of Buddha, who lived in India c. 566–486 BCE. He was born a prince, and his early life was one of



(detail)

Tibeto-Chinese
Avalokitesvara, 17th–18th century
gilt-bronze, semi-precious stones, pigment
115.0 × 72.5 × 45.4 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1966 (1485–D5)

luxury and privilege. He was not exposed to the misery and suffering in the world until he was 29 years old. He then abandoned his princely life and went on a spiritual quest.

As a result of his experiences and an extended period of deep thinking, Buddha became spiritually enlightened. He identified desire, the longing for pleasure or power, as the cause of suffering in the world. He taught people to let go of desire to end suffering. Spiritual enlightenment leads a Buddhist to nirvana: release from the cycle of rebirth.

Although the original Buddha is the best-known, there are many buddhas. Buddhas are not gods; they are enlightened beings who achieve nirvana.

Bodhisattvas are also important figures in Buddhism. A bodhisattva has attained enlightenment but delays nirvana in order to help others achieve enlightenment.

In different places and times, bodhisattvas have taken on various names, characteristics and stories. One of the most well-known bodhisattvas is Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of compassion.

Avalokitesvara

Avalokitesvara is the patron deity of Tibet and the bodhisattva of compassion. Can you see how the spiritual importance and attributes of Avalokitesvara are communicated in this sculpture?

You can find many clues in the physical form of Avalokitesvara. According to Buddhist tradition, when Avalokitesvara saw the suffering in the world, he was so overwhelmed with compassion that his head burst open and 1000 helping arms sprang from his body. His spiritual father, Amitabha, put his head back together, making nine complete faces. Most of the faces are gentle and peaceful. They convey the qualities of moderation and calm that are an important part of Buddhist life. Above these, Amitabha placed the demonic head of Vajrapani to scare away evil. Amitabha placed his own head at the top.

Avalokitesvara's 1000 hands fan outwards from his body. They reflect his ability to extend compassion to those in need. In the palm of each hand is a tiny eye. The eyes show that Avalokitesvara has the ability to see all and seek out those in need.

Buddhist art is rich in symbolism. Buddhas and bodhisattvas are often shown with their hands in special gestures called mudras. Each mudra, or combination of mudras, has a different meaning. In this figure of Avalokitesvara, the central hands are in the gesture of praying. The lower pair of hands has the palms turned outwards in a gesture of charity. Symbolic objects are sometimes included in the gestures. The remaining main hands in this sculpture originally held small objects. If you look closely, you will see that the upper right hand is the only one that still holds an object.

- 1 Describe how the figure of *Avalokitesvara* communicates the qualities of moderation and calm. Your answer should refer to the body, gestures and facial expressions.
- 2 Compare *Avalokitesvara* with Gaddi's painting of the *Madonna and Child* (p. 71) or *Wanjina* (p. 147) to show how each artwork communicates the special attributes of the deity represented. In your answer, consider the:
 - use of materials
 - representation of the deity
 - use of symbols.

EXPLORE

Find an example of an image of a bodhisattva of compassion made in another time or place. Describe the bodhisattva's form. In what way is it different from or similar to the example illustrated here?

CREATE

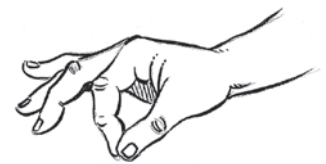
Create a two-dimensional or three-dimensional image of a supreme being for something you are interested in, such as music, sport, fashion, dance or technology. Before you start, think about how you might select and use symbols, art materials, elements and principles to communicate the special qualities and attributes of your supreme being.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Buddhism.



Charity



Understanding



Meditation



Protection



Praying
Buddhist mudras
(hand gestures)

A deity is a god or goddess, or a being of similar status.

5.5

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Culturally significant artforms are often used by contemporary artists in unexpected ways. The artists' re-imagining of traditional images and artforms provides new perspectives on traditional cultures.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to discover other artworks by Dono, including paintings.

Wayang kulit and *wayang golek* are two forms of traditional Javanese folk theatre. Both forms use puppets and music to tell stories from mythology and to comment on society. *Wayang kulit* are flat, two-dimensional puppets made from stiffened leather used for shadow theatre. *Wayang golek* are three-dimensional puppets.

Building on tradition

Indonesian artist **Heri Dono** (b. 1960) combines aspects of traditional and contemporary culture in his work in imaginative and unexpected ways.

Traditional Javanese folk theatre (*wayang*) has been an important influence on Dono's work. *Flying Angels* is inspired by Indonesia's wooden three-dimensional rod puppets (*wayang golek*).

Dono's angels also reflect his interest in 1960s American robots and comics; they are hybrid winged creatures with whirring motors made from recycled electronic and clock parts. The first flying figure Dono made was inspired by Flash Gordon, an intergalactic comic-book hero. The incongruous combination of elements in *Flying Angels* gives the work both a playful quality and a slightly disturbing edge.

While angels often have religious connotations, for Dono they are symbols of inspiration and freedom. Indonesia did not have a democratically elected government until 1998, and Dono made his first **installation** of angels in 1996. Political and social commentary is an important aspect of his work.

Dono is one of Indonesia's leading contemporary artists, and he has participated in major exhibitions (including 27 **biennales**) and artist residencies in many countries. While he draws on materials and ideas from his travels, Indonesian artistic practices continue to play a vital role in his work.

- 1 List antonyms (opposite words, such as traditional and contemporary, mechanical and organic) to describe the incongruous elements and different meanings you find in Dono's work.



(detail)

Heri Dono
Indonesian, b. 1960
Flying Angels, 2006
polyester resin, clock parts,
electronic components,
paint, wood, cotton gauze
each approx. 59 × 140 × 15 cm
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Gift of Gene and Brian
Sherman, 2008
© Heri Dono





(detail)

Liu Xiaoxian
 born China 1963, arrived Australia 1990
Our Gods, 2000
 18 C-type photographs
 each 100 × 100 cm
 Art Gallery of New South Wales
 DG Wilson Bequest Fund, 2000
 © Liu Xiaoxian

- 2 Do you agree that Dono combines traditional and contemporary cultural references in his work in imaginative and unexpected ways? Explain.
- 3 Suggest what links Dono sees between angels and ‘inspiration and freedom’?

East meets west

These photographic artworks by **Liu Xiaoxian** (b. 1963) depict two iconic figures from eastern and western religious traditions. On the left is an image of Jesus Christ. He is wearing a crown of thorns, which represents the suffering he endured for humanity. Such images are very common in Christian churches. On the right is the laughing figure of a popular Chinese Buddhist deity.

This work is monumental. To see each entire image, gallery visitors need to stand back and look at the artworks from a distance. It is also important to look closely at the photographs. When visitors do that, they make a surprise discovery. The figure of Christ is composed of images of the Buddha, and the figure of the Buddha is composed of

tiny images of Christ. They are each made up of the other. Each large image is made up of 22 500 smaller images.

Liu Xiaoxian has made many artworks in which he combines symbols or images from different cultures in playful or unexpected ways. In this way, he draws attention to what different cultures have in common as well as what makes them unique.

- 4 What is your interpretation of the meaning of *Our Gods*? Why do you interpret the artwork in this way? In your answer, consider the significance of the images the artist has chosen, the scale of the work and how the artwork needs to be viewed.



CREATE

Identify an artform, image or symbol that is culturally significant to you. Think about how you can combine this with images, symbols or materials from another context to create a new artwork that has a meaningful and interesting connection between the two.

Liu Xiaoxian is the brother of Ah Xian (pp. 114–15)

5.6

ART OF PROTEST

Many artworks are a critique of society. In such artworks, artists often express strong feelings, criticise events or protest against social injustices.

After being exhibited in Paris in 1937, *Guernica* toured Europe and North America to raise awareness of the dangers of fascism and to raise money to fight the Nationalists. At the beginning of the Second World War, it was housed temporarily at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. Picasso wanted the painting to go to Spain, but he refused to allow this while Franco was still in power.

Picasso did not live to see the painting in Spain; he died in 1973, two years before Franco. The painting arrived in Spain in 1981, 100 years after Picasso's birth.

Devastated by war

Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) was born in Spain but moved to Paris in 1900. In Paris, he established his career as an artist.

Picasso strongly opposed the Spanish Nationalists, led by General Franco. In 1936, after years of turmoil in Spain, Franco led a military uprising against the elected Popular Front government and sparked a civil war. In April 1937, Picasso was devastated to learn of the bombing of the Spanish town of Guernica by German forces who were assisting the Nationalists. Both Nazi Germany and fascist Italy supported Franco and helped him achieve power in Spain.

Several days after the bombing of Guernica, the first photographs of the destruction reached French newspapers. The town had been subjected to several hours of intense bombing. Fleeing citizens were gunned down by aerial fire; 1600 people are believed to have died, with hundreds more wounded.

Picasso had been asked to make a painting for the Spanish Pavilion at the 1937 World

Fair and had been struggling to find a subject. It was now clear to him. He began making sketches for *Guernica* immediately. The huge painting was finished within three months.

Guernica is a harrowing image that focuses on the suffering and despair that followed the bombing. Can you see the distraught mother holding her dead child, the screaming woman with burning clothes and the speared horse writhing in agony? The scene is one of chaos and confusion. The **distortion** and fragmentation of the forms powerfully convey the violence and fear associated with war.



(detail)

Pablo Picasso
Spanish, 1881–1973
Guernica, 1937
351 × 782 cm
Museo Nacional Centro de
Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid



Cubism and symbolism

Stylistically, *Guernica* reflects the influence of **Cubism**. Earlier in his career, Picasso and Georges Braque (1882–1963) had become interested in the contradictions associated with representing three-dimensional forms on flat, two-dimensional surfaces. They rejected the idea that art should imitate what people see. They developed a style known as Cubism, which involved looking at a subject from different **viewpoints** and combining the fragmented views into a single image.

Picasso's interest in symbolism is also important in *Guernica*. The symbolic meanings of elements in the painting have been interpreted in different ways. For example, the

horse is often seen as representing the people, while the bull is associated with brutality. Picasso avoided specific explanations of the symbolism in the work as he preferred to let viewers interpret it for themselves.

For discussion of a related work by Picasso, see p. 212.

- 1 Describe how Picasso conveys his strong feelings about the bombing in *Guernica*. Consider his use of scale and representation of the subject matter, including his use of art elements such as colour, shape and line.
- 2 Use sentences or an annotated diagram to identify three things in the painting that you believe have symbolic meaning. Suggest what they might mean and why.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to the Australian War Memorial's and the Shrine of Remembrance's websites.

EXPLORE

Look at the work of other artists who have created artworks about war, such as Francisco Goya y Lucientes (1746–1828), George Gittoes (b. 1949), George Lambert (1873–1930), Leon Golub (1922–2004) and Jenny Holzer (b. 1950).

Find a work that interests you. What ideas does the work communicate about war and how? What is it about the work that interests you? Present your findings as a short talk to the class.

EXPLORE

Referring to the websites of the Australian War Memorial and the Shrine of Remembrance (Melbourne), develop a presentation about how heroes of war have been portrayed in art.

Discuss the work of at least three artists. Comment on the types of images, materials and subject matter used to illustrate the theme of war. Present your findings as a PowerPoint presentation.

DISCUSS

Research the Official War Art Scheme. Why do you think it is considered valuable to send artists to war zones?

DISCUSS

A giant tapestry of *Guernica* hangs in the United Nations building in New York.

In February 2003, when the United States presented its case for attacking Iraq, the tapestry was covered so that it was not visible in the background. The official explanation was that a plain background was required for the television cameras; however, many people perceived it as an act of censorship.

Why might people have suspected that the shrouding of the tapestry reproduction of *Guernica* was an act of censorship in these circumstances? What does this controversy suggest to you about the relationship between art and politics?

CREATE

The world has always been affected by terrible conflicts. Create an artwork that reflects your ideas about a modern conflict. It may be helpful to collect media images of the conflict as a reference.

Choose an artform and approach that you believe makes your work relevant to the present time.



Pablo Picasso
Guernica, 1937 (details)

A CONTEMPORARY ISSUE

Many contemporary Australian artists create work that addresses current issues in Australian society.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Guan Wei.

An asylum seeker is someone who seeks refuge in a foreign country to escape persecution, usually for religious or political reasons, in their own country.

SIEV stands for suspected illegal entry vessel.

One of three asylum seeker boats at Ashmore Reef. Two naval boats and a customs boat were close by.

NewsPix/Megan Lewis



A drama at sea

'*Boatman*' No. 2 by Chinese-Australian artist **Guan Wei** (b. 1957) depicts a pale blue expanse of water and floating clouds. It is a strangely serene setting for a drama involving dark military machines and small, pink figures who appear to be struggling for survival. Some of the figures are abandoning a sinking boat; others are clinging to floating debris or have been cast adrift in the water. A few figures have reached land, but their poses suggest that their struggle is not over. What do you think their actions represent? Are they desperately signalling the military for help or are these gestures of despair?

Asylum seekers in Australia

When this image is viewed in the context of recent debates in Australia and in other parts of the world about refugees, asylum seekers and illegal immigration issues, important clues about the meaning of the work are revealed. Refugees, asylum seekers and illegal immigration were also topical when Guan Wei made this painting. Of particular significance is a series of events in 2001, including the *Tampa* crisis and the SIEV-X disaster, which triggered heated debate about Australia's treatment of asylum seekers.

In 2001, large numbers of people were arriving in Australia to seek asylum. Many of these people were fleeing religious or political persecution in the Middle East and had travelled here from Indonesia with people smugglers on small, overcrowded fishing boats.

In August 2001, a Norwegian container ship, the MV *Tampa*, rescued a group of asylum seekers from a wooden fishing boat stranded in international waters north-west of Australia's Christmas Island. The ship's captain planned to take the asylum seekers to Christmas Island, but the Australian Government refused permission for the

ship to enter Australia's territorial waters.

Concerned about the welfare of the asylum seekers, the captain declared a state of emergency and proceeded towards Christmas Island. The Australian Government then sent troops to board the ship and stop its progress. An international stand-off followed, until Australia eventually accepted responsibility for the asylum seekers. Most of the asylum seekers were sent to detention centres on Nauru, an island in the South Pacific. Others were accepted by New Zealand.

Two months later, as the government toughened its approach to border protection and illegal immigration, the SIEV-X disaster occurred. SIEV-X was the name given to a small, dilapidated Indonesian fishing boat carrying more than 400 asylum seekers that sank as it tried to reach Christmas Island in Australian waters in October 2001. A few survived, but 353 people, mainly women and children, drowned.

Welcoming or hostile?

The complex issues related to these events are of concern to many Australians, including Guan Wei. Although '*Boatman*' No. 2 does not describe a specific incident, it clearly draws attention to the vulnerability of people who have journeyed from their homeland, sometimes taking great risks, in their search for a better life. The painting raises questions about how these people are received. Are they assisted and welcomed, or are they met with hostility?

Guan Wei was born in China, where he trained as an artist. He first came to Australia in 1989. He became a permanent resident of Australia, but he spends time in both China and Australia. His work often explores themes related to migration, cultural differences and the environment. While his subject matter is serious, his work is characterised by a gentle, quiet beauty and whimsy.



Guan Wei
born China 1957, arrived
Australia 1989
'Boatman' No. 2, 2005
acrylic on canvas
162 × 137 cm (3 panels)
Courtesy the artist, Martin
Browne Contemporary,
Sydney, and ARC One
Gallery, Melbourne

In *'Boatman' No. 2*, it is apparent how the artist's distinctive style has been influenced by his Chinese heritage. The use of vertical panels, the arrangement of the elements and the elegance of the line work suggest a link to traditional Chinese scroll paintings (p. 121).

- 1 What do you believe is happening in *'Boatman' No. 2*? What is it about the painting that communicates this idea to you?
- 2 How does Guan Wei's exploration of a contemporary social issue compare with that of Pablo Picasso (pp. 156–7)? Consider similarities and differences in:
 - scale
 - subject matter
 - representation of subject matter (including the use of art elements, materials and techniques)
 - mood and atmosphere.
- 3 Which painting has the most meaning for you: *Guernica* (p. 156) or *'Boatman' No. 2*? Explain why.

- 4 Compare *'Boatman' No. 2* with the scroll painting by Kuncan (p. 121). What does this comparison suggest to you about:
 - the influence of traditional Chinese art on Guan Wei's painting
 - how Guan Wei's work reflects a contemporary context?

EXPLORE

Find out more about the *Tampa* crisis, the SIEV-X disaster or the Children Overboard affair of 2001. Make a point-form summary of the event and the issues associated with it.

How does this knowledge add to your understanding of *'Boatman' No. 2*?

DISCUSS

Although *'Boatman' No. 2* was created in 2005, do you think the issues that it addresses are still relevant today? Explain.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for further information about the *Tampa* crisis.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for further information about refugees on the website of the Refugee Council of Australia.

5.8

THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

The legacy of Australia's colonial history is visible in the work of many Indigenous Australian artists who explore how Australian history has affected Indigenous communities and cultures. Sometimes, the stories the artists share are personal.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Dowling and her work, including Federation Series: 1901–2001.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to find out more about the Stolen Generations.

Julie Dowling
 Australian (Badimaya),
 b. 1969
**Federation Series:
 1901–2001**, 2001
 synthetic polymer paint,
 earth pigments, metallic
 paint and glitter on canvas
 (1–10) 60.6 × 555.0 cm
 (variable) (overall)
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Purchased through the
 NGV Foundation with the
 assistance of Rupert Myer,
 Governor, 2001
 (2001.538.1–10)
 © Julie Dowling. Licensed by
 Viscopy, 2016

Stolen Generations

The **Stolen Generations** is the term used to describe the generations of children of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent who were removed from their families, mainly between 1905 and 1969, to be raised in orphanages and missions or by non-Indigenous foster families. The legislation behind these actions was based on assumptions and views prevalent at the time, including the idea that Indigenous Australians needed to be assimilated into the culture of the non-Indigenous population.

A national inquiry into the Stolen Generations led to the 1997 *Bringing Them Home* report, which explained the devastating short-term and long-term effects that separating Indigenous Australian children from their families has had on individuals, families, communities and culture.

Family history: Australian history

Australians celebrated the centenary of Federation in 2001; however, for many Indigenous Australians – including **Julie Dowling** (b. 1959), who is of Badimaya (mid-west Western Australia), Irish and Scottish descent – the anniversary of Federation was a reminder of the painful legacy of Australia's colonial history and

European settlement's effects on Aboriginal culture, communities and families.

Dowling works mainly in portraiture and creates compelling images of her family and community members.

Auntie Dot 1920–30 is one of ten paintings that make up the Federation Series: 1901–2001, which Dowling created to mark the centenary of Federation in 2001. Each painting features a member of Julie's family and focuses on one decade of Australian history. This portrait is of Dorothy Latham, Julie's great-aunt, who was taken away from her Badimaya mother when she was eight years old and put in orphanage by her non-Indigenous (*wudjula*) father.

Each portrait in the series is surrounded by a background that tells a story of the person. In this portrait, the masses of children in white dresses, the church buildings and the skeletal men in uniform clearly indicate the story of the Stolen Generations.

Like the others in the series, this painting is richly layered with text and images that are drawn from public records, archives and family history. Much of the detail is only visible under close examination.

- 1 Study *Auntie Dot 1920–30* and suggest what it is that makes Dowling's portraits so compelling. Consider the subject matter and the way it is presented.

A scientific view of culture

From early in Australia's colonial history, scientific research models and methods that are considered inappropriate today were used to study Aboriginal people and their culture. For example, terms such as 'half-caste' and 'quadroon' were used to classify degrees of Aboriginality. Such classifications played a role in determining whether Indigenous Australian children would be removed from their families.





Julie Dowling
 Australian (Badimaya), b. 1969
Auntie Dot 1920–30, 2001
 From the Federation Series: 1901–2001, 2001
 synthetic polymer paint, earth pigments, metallic
 paint and glitter on canvas
 60.6 × 50.6 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Purchased through the NGV Foundation with
 the assistance of Rupert Myer, Governor, 2001
 (2001.538.3)
 © Julie Dowling. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Reclaiming images

South Australian artist **Yhonnie Scarce** (b. 1973) is descended from the Kokatha people from the Lake Eyre region and the Nukunu people from the Port Lincoln area. In her work, Scarce explores the effect of colonisation on Indigenous Australian people.

Scarce majored in glass-making during her art studies, and the unique qualities of glass

are an important aspect of her work. Her work *N0000*, *N2359*, *N2351*, *N2402* features a set of glass bell jars, which are traditionally used in science laboratories. One jar contains blown glass yams, a traditional and culturally significant bush food. The other jars contain photographs, but the crackles on the glass of the jars make it hard to see them clearly.

The photographs are of Scarce's grandmother, grandfather and father; however, they are not typical family photographs. Anthropologist Norman Tindale took the photographs during the 1930s, when he documented thousands of Aboriginal people around Australia. His research included taking frontal and profile photographs, physical measurements, and blood and saliva samples. Tindale's research data is now held by the South Australian Museum. A number identified each person, as seen in the photographs of Scarce's relatives and in the title of her work.

- 2 How does the use of glass in *N0000*, *N2359*, *N2351*, *N2402* contribute to the meaning of the work?
- 3 In what way can the work of Dowling and Scarce be seen as both personal and political?

In the Federation Series: 1901–2001, the arrangement of the ten paintings forms both a timeline of Australian history and a family tree of four generations of Dowling's family.

The term 'half-caste' was commonly used to describe a person with one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander parent. The term 'quadroon' was used to describe a person with one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander grandparent. These terms narrowly define identity, are offensive to Aboriginal people and are no longer used.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identity.

EXPLORE

Identify a work that interests you by an Indigenous Australian artist. The work should somehow address the effects of colonisation on Indigenous people or culture.

Explain the idea explored in the work and what interests you most about the work.



Yhonnie Scarce
 Australian (Kokatha and Nukunu), b. 1973
N0000, *N2359*, *N2351*, *N2402*, 2013
 blown glass, archive
 photographs
 dimensions variable
 glasswork developed with
 the JamFactory, South
 Australia
 Courtesy of the artist and
 THIS IS NO FANTASY +
 dianne tanzer gallery

THE ART OF SCIENCE

5.9

ARTISTS AS RESEARCHERS

Although art and science are often seen as separate disciplines, you will find interesting connections between the two in the work of some artists.

Alamy Stock Photo/INTERFOTO



Leonardo da Vinci
Italian,
1452–1519
Anatomy of the Neck,
c. 1515

The 2012–13 exhibition of anatomical drawings by da Vinci, Leonardo da Vinci: *The Mechanics of Man*, included CT and MRI scans and 3D computer modelling of anatomy to allow comparisons with da Vinci's drawings.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see images from the Leonardo da Vinci: *The Mechanics of Man* exhibition.

Body of work

Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) was both an artist and a scientist. Although he is perhaps best known for his paintings, including the iconic *Mona Lisa*, he devoted a significant part of his life to the scientific study of anatomy, zoology, geology, botany, optics, astronomy, aeronautics and hydrodynamics.

Da Vinci lived during the Italian **Renaissance**. Before this period, Europe's knowledge and understanding of the world was largely informed by religious beliefs and superstition. During the Renaissance,

however, the focus shifted to developing a rational, scientific understanding of the world.

His extensive body of drawings reveal his curiosity about the natural world, his pioneering methods of scientific inquiry, his inventiveness and his artistic skills. Based on his study of the anatomy and flight of birds and bats, he designed flying machines that anticipated modern aeroplanes and helicopters.

The human body was an endless source of fascination for da Vinci. He did many experiments and studies to learn how the body works. He dissected more than 30 corpses as part of his investigations, and his research into human anatomy is documented in his many anatomical drawings. These drawings reflect an unprecedented understanding of the human body. Modern doctors have been able to identify the medical conditions of the subjects represented in some of his drawings.

Like his other anatomical drawings, *Anatomy of the Neck* is annotated with notes in da Vinci's distinctive mirror writing. In the precise but delicate linear and tonal rendering of the detail of the anatomical structures, you see evidence of the art in da Vinci's science.

- 1 Do you think da Vinci's artistic skills would have given him an advantage over other anatomists of his period? Explain.
- 2 The critic Jonathan Jones said, 'Leonardo's anatomical drawings are both icons of science, and wonders of art.'¹⁵ Explain what you think he meant by this.

DISCUSS

Do you think it is possible for a person to work as both a scientist and an artist today? Why?

Collaborating with nature

Australian artist **Cameron Robbins** (b. 1963) harnesses the energy of the natural world to create **site-specific art**. He has worked with wind, water, sun, fire and even electromagnetic forces. He has worked in urban and remote environments in Australia and overseas. A significant part of his practice involves designing and creating structures that transform natural energy into drawings or sounds. His work often reveals an unexpected beauty and order in this energy.

Wind drawing machines have been an important part of Robbins's art practice for more than 20 years. He says about his machines:

While it is a mechanical thing with axles, bearings and pulley wheels, it also has inbuilt flexibility which allows it to respond to subtle and chaotic dynamics and to stray from any predetermined path.¹⁶

In the pattern of marks in each wind drawing, the invisible forces and rhythms in nature are made visible. In *Wind Drawing: 20–24 March 2013 (Equinox) 98 hrs NKD* a vortex-like pattern of delicate lines has been created. Dark masses of lines suggest repeated movement and intense energy. Other lines

maintain a circular flow of movement but trace a more erratic path. Can you imagine the sort of conditions that might have created this work?

Robbins's art has been inspired by interests developed in his youth and at art school.

A fascination with natural dynamics began with an intensive period of surfing as a teenager. Coupled with an enthusiasm for science experiments, astronomy and weather, these experiences informed my studies at art school. Sculpture led to a fascination with objects that responded to the landscape, such as radio repeaters and wind turbines.¹⁷

- 3 Study *Wind Drawing: 20–24 March 2013 (Equinox) 98 hrs NKD* closely, and explain how you think Robbins's work can be seen to reveal an unexpected beauty and order in energy.
- 4 What aspects of Robbins's art practice reflect links to science? What aspects diverge from science?
- 5 Compare *Wind Drawing: 20–24 March 2013 (Equinox) 98 hrs NKD* with *Dreamtime Story of the Willy Willy* (p. 103). What similarities and differences do you observe? Suggest reasons for these.

Da Vinci planned to publish his anatomical drawings in a treatise on the human body but abandoned these plans. The drawings remained with his papers but were not widely known about until the twentieth century.

Da Vinci's unique form of handwriting is described as 'mirror writing' because it runs from right to left across the page.

'Principles for the development of a complete mind: Study the science of art. Study the art of science. Develop your senses – especially learn how to see. Realise that everything connects to everything else.'¹⁸

Leonardo da Vinci

To see a photograph of Robbins with his portable wind drawing machine, see p. 6. To see a drawing of one of his machines, see p. 17.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a video about Robbins and to learn more about his work.

Wind Drawing: 20–24 March 2013 (Equinox) 98 hrs NKD was made during a residency at the Nordic Artists' Centre Dalse (NKD) in Norway. Over a period of three months, Robbins produced a suite of 16 drawings from a wind machine installed on the roof of an abandoned house.



Cameron Robbins
Australian, b. 1963
Wind Drawing: 20–24 March 2013 (Equinox) 98 hrs NKD, 2013
drawing in pen and black ink
56 × 76 cm (image);
56 × 76 cm (sheet)
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Gift of the artist, 2014. Donated
through the Australian Government's
Cultural Gifts Program
© Cameron Robbins

THE ART OF SCIENCE

5.10

NATURE STUDY

The study of nature is an enduring subject in art. Botanical studies have been a particular focus for some artists.



Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia/Bridgeman Images

John William Lewin
born Britain 1770, arrived Australia 1800, died 1819
The Gigantic Lyllie of New South Wales, 1810
pencil, watercolour on cream laid paper
53.8 × 43.1 cm (borderlines); 54.1 × 43.6 cm (sheet);
68.0 × 57.5 × 4.0 cm (frame)
Purchased 1968
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

Art serving science

Sometimes the links between art and science are practical. English artist **John William Lewin** (1770–1819) specialised in making artworks that scientifically recorded the natural world. He came to Australia in 1800 and was the first professional artist to arrive here as a free settler.

Imagine what an exciting place Australia must have been for an artist with Lewin's interests. He had a whole new natural environment to discover: plants, animals, insects and birds. Lewin's paintings and

drawings became an important source of information about Australia for scientists and natural historians. Many of the artworks that he made were sent back to England where they were published as books.

Because the artworks that Lewin made were to be used for scientific purposes, they had to be accurate and provide as much information on the subject as possible. Notice that Lewin has painted *The Gigantic Lyllie of New South Wales* against a plain background to emphasise the detail of the flower. Several of the petals are folded down to show the colour and the pattern on the inside of the petal and the appearance of the plant in more detail.

- 1 Based on your observation of *The Gigantic Lyllie of New South Wales*, describe the key features of the flower.
- 2 Imagine you are responsible for training an artist to be a botanical illustrator. The artist you are training has previously only painted flowers as decorative items. Note three important rules that the artist should follow to be a successful botanical illustrator. Give reasons for each rule.

New dimensions

Waratah by Australian artist **Robyn Stacey** (b. 1952) is a **lenticular** image. The flower in the artwork appears to be three-dimensional and when viewed from different angles can be seen in changing states.

Lenticular images are created from a series of still images that are spliced together in a sequence of microscopic strips to create a single image. The image is then overlaid with

A herbarium is a collection of preserved plant specimens. The National Herbarium of New South Wales contains over one million pressed, dried plant specimens, including some collected by Sir Joseph Banks on Captain Cook's voyage to Australia in 1770.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about the Royal Botanic Garden's herbarium in Sydney.

DISCUSS

Why have art and science often been seen as separate disciplines? What are their similarities and differences? What can artists and scientists learn from each other?

DISCUSS

Despite the technology now available to record images, there is still a demand for **botanical illustration**. Why do you believe this is so?

a special plastic sheet that has a corrugated surface made up of thousands of facets, which work like lenses. Each lens focuses on and magnifies a strip of the background image. When the lenticular image is viewed from different angles, the lenses control which strips are seen so that a whole image is revealed. An **illusion** of depth and movement is created as you see information from different lenses.

Throughout her career, Stacey has exploited the possibilities of technology to show familiar subjects in new ways. She was one of the first photographers in Australia to use computer technology to create, layer and manipulate images. She is fascinated by how photography can reveal information not ordinarily seen by the eye.

In 2000, Stacey worked as **artist-in-residence** at the National Herbarium of New South Wales, Sydney. *Waratah* is a lenticular image that Stacey made based on specimens in the herbarium's collection. She has also created other photographic works exploring different aspects of botanical images, history and research.



Robyn Stacey
Australian, b. 1952
Waratah, 2001
From Hot House
lenticular
90 × 90 cm
Courtesy Stills Gallery, Sydney

- 3 Explain three differences between *Waratah* and a conventional photograph of a waratah. In your answer, refer to how the viewer sees and understands each image.
- 4 If you had a choice between *Waratah*, *The Gigantic Lyllie of New South Wales*, *Wheel Flower* (p. 36) or *Regenerating Fern* (p. 37) for your home, which image would you choose and why?

- 5 Would your choice change if you were a botanist choosing an image for your workplace? Why?

In 2003, Stacey completed a lenticular portrait of Douglas Frew Waterhouse, a leading Australian scientist and the former head of entomology at CSIRO. The portrait is in the collection of the National Portrait Gallery, Canberra.



CREATE

Create two two-dimensional images of the same subject using photography, digital images, drawing or painting. Each image should show a different state of the subject, such as a happy/sad face or a night/day landscape. It is important to use the same size paper and the same basic composition for each work.

Take a piece of light card, twice the width of your work but the same height. Fold the card into an even number of regular concertina folds to create an upright screen.

Count the number of panels in your screen. Divide this number in half and cut each of your images into this number of strips. Each strip should be the same dimension as the folds on your screen.

Mount the strips in sequence on the surface of the concertina screen, alternating the strips from each image.

The end result should be an image that presents different views of the same subject from different angles. Consider how this presentation of images may relate, in a very simplified way, to the technology used to make a lenticular image.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see Douglas Frew Waterhouse's portrait and other artworks by Stacey.

The technology used to make lenticular images was first developed in the 1940s. It has been widely used in novelty items, such as postcards and winking eyes on plastic toys. Recent advances in technology, including digital technology, have led to images with greater depth and motion.

5.11

NEW FRONTIERS

Artists who explore new ideas and questions in science can play a significant role in presenting these ideas to the public.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to the Tissue Culture and Art Project.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for information about the Extra Ear project on Stelarc's website.

Biotechnology uses living organisms or biological systems to process or produce goods or services.

Reconsidering the body

Australian artist **Stelarc** (b. 1946) has worked extensively with technology to find new ways to explore and extend the human body. His projects include sound and film recordings of inside his own body and a mechanical third hand controlled by electrodes attached to his muscles. Stelarc has collaborated with experts in a range of areas to realise his ambitious projects.

Stelarc envisages a future where we will be able to use technology to redesign our own bodies. He has considered possibilities including replacing limbs or internal organs with artificial components.

Photographer: Nina Sellars



Stelarc
Australian, b. 1946
Ear on Arm, 2006
London, Los Angeles,
Melbourne

Stelarc's Extra Ear project reflects this thinking. He conceived the project in 1997. In 2003, he collaborated with the Tissue Culture and Art Project, two artists in Perth. Together with Stelarc they created *Extra Ear – 1/4 Scale*, a small-scale replica of Stelarc's ear made from human cells. Although it was only possible to keep this ear alive for a limited time, it was exhibited in Melbourne in 2003 (and has subsequently been exhibited in Ljubljana and Adelaide).

More recently, Stelarc's Ear on Arm project saw him undergo several surgical procedures to construct a full-sized ear on his forearm. The ear's scaffold was created from a porous biomaterial commonly used as a cartilage replacement in plastic surgery. The skin was suctioned over the scaffold, over a period of six months, allowing tissue ingrowth and vascularisation to occur, fully integrating the ear construct with Stelarc's arm. Stelarc's goal is to equip his extra ear with a microphone connected to wi-fi so that the ear becomes a remote listening device, allowing people anywhere in the world to listen to what he hears.

- 1 How does the use of human cells add to the meaning or ideas suggested by Stelarc's ear projects? Could synthetic materials have conveyed the same ideas? Explain.
- 2 List three different questions or ideas that Stelarc's work raises about biotechnology or art. Explain what it is about the work that provokes these questions or ideas.
- 3 Based on your understanding of Stelarc's work, do you think it is best described as art or science or both? Why?

Artificial life forms

The unusual-looking creature in these photographs was given the Latin name *Exallocephalla parthenopa* by a taxonomist (a specialist in classification) at Taronga Zoo. It is more commonly known as a siren mole, or SO2, which stands for synthetic organism 2.

DISCUSS

A major challenge for Stelarc is finding the appropriate medical assistance. Doctors often express interest in his projects but are not willing to provide the medical assistance required.

Suggest why a doctor might have concerns about a project such as *Extra Ear*. Why might this project be seen differently from cosmetic surgery, which is widely accepted? Would you assist Stelarc if you were an appropriately qualified medical professional? Why?

Australian artist **Patricia Piccinini** (b. 1965) was inspired to create SO2 after learning that scientists had successfully synthesised DNA to create the first synthetic organism, SO1, a life form created entirely from chemicals.

Piccinini's SO2 began as a drawing. Piccinini then worked with expert model-makers to give SO2 physical form. It is constructed from latex, but its body includes robotics so that it looks like it is breathing. Its physical features are inspired by several different animals, including the naked mole rat of Africa.

Social Studies is one of a series of photographs in which SO2 roams the urban environment. In 2001, two SO2s were part of an **installation** in the wombat enclosure at Melbourne Zoo.

Piccinini has explored the implications of new biotechnology, such as tissue engineering, genetic engineering and stem-cell research in two- and three-dimensional images that offer a glimpse into a possible future. Her creations, such as SO2, often have a strong visual or emotional appeal that helps the viewer consider both the work and the issues surrounding it. SO2 encourages people to think about what they want from the technology that allows people to synthesise organisms.

- 4 Why do you think the artist took photographs of SO2 in urban environments? What is going on in *Social Studies*? What do you think is significant about this?
- 5 How might exhibiting SO2 in an animal enclosure at the zoo add to the ideas associated with the work?
- 6 Imagine you have just visited the zoo and seen two SO2s in the wombat enclosure. Write a letter to the zoo's director expressing your opinion of exhibiting SO2s in this way.



- 7 Contemporary art often provokes the audience to ask questions. List three questions or ideas that SO2 suggests to you, explaining what it is about the work that raises these questions.

Patricia Piccinini
Australian, b. 1965
Social Studies, 2000
digital C-type photograph
80 × 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist,
Tolarno and Roslyn Oxley9
galleries



Patricia Piccinini
Australian, b. 1965
Exallocephalla parthenopa
vs Vombatus ursinus
(SO2), 2001
digital C-type photograph
53 × 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Tolarno
and Roslyn Oxley9 galleries

After talking with zoologists and ecologists about SO2, Piccinini was keen to create a new, improved version of her creature. The next stage in SO2's evolution is SO3, seen in *The Young Family* (2002). Many other works by the artist have explored related themes.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to find Piccinini's website, an iPad app she created, her work at the Venice Biennale and *The Young Family* (2002).

CREATE

Make a model or an image of a hybrid animal, bird or insect. Your creature should have physical features that are clearly adapted to suit a particular environment.

Give your animal a scientific name and write a short entry for a natural history book, explaining its physical features and habitat. (Your science teacher may be able to help.)

If you have access to appropriate technology, consider creating an image that morphs from one creature into another.

THE ART OF INFLUENCE

Many artists find inspiration for their work by studying the work of other artists. For some artists, this is a form of homage.

Glover's talents as a landscape artist were widely recognised. He was awarded a gold medal for one of his paintings at the prestigious Paris Salon exhibition in 1814.

Since 2004, the John Glover Society, established to draw attention to Glover's innovative work, has awarded an annual prize for a work judged to be the best contemporary landscape painting of Tasmania.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to the John Glover Society's website.

The artist Tom Roberts (pp. 124–5, 150) paid homage to Glover by restoring his grave in northern Tasmania.

Glover used sketchbooks to make studies of different subjects, including plants, animals, figures and the landscape. He often wrote detailed descriptions of the landscape, including atmospheric effects and colour. The sketchbooks were used as a reference for his paintings.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see Claude's *Landscape with Piping Shepherd* and a painting by Glover inspired by this work.

The picturesque

Have you ever heard anyone describe a scene as **picturesque**? Picturesque literally means picture-like. It is a term used to describe a visually pleasing and interesting scene 'worthy of a picture'. Eighteenth-century England was fascinated by the picturesque.

Artists working in the picturesque style often sought inspiration in nature. They usually made many sketches of the **landscape** for their paintings; however, they typically composed their paintings in the **studio**. They arranged the different elements of the landscape to ensure their painting's composition was harmonious and interesting. A picturesque composition typically included the following conventions:

- a clear **foreground**, **middleground** and **background**
- large, dark trees in the foreground to frame the view
- a meandering path or river to lead the eye through the landscape
- figures or other features to add interest to the scene.

The English Claude

English artist **John Glover** (1767–1849) arrived in Australia in 1831. He is one of Australia's best-known **colonial artists**. His picturesque landscape paintings were inspired and influenced by the work of French artist Claude Lorrain (p. 28).

Glover first studied Claude's paintings in London and purchased two paintings by him in 1812. It was common practice for artists to copy the work of artists they admired. This was usually done to pay **homage** to the artist and to learn about the artist's style, colour and technique.

Glover used the lessons he learnt from Claude to create views of the English countryside in the picturesque style. He

soon became known as the English Claude.

In 1818, he travelled to Italy and visited many of the sites that had inspired Claude, including Tivoli in the hills outside Rome. Glover displayed his own paintings alongside a painting by Claude at an exhibition in London in 1820.

Inspired by Australia

Despite his success in Europe, in 1830, Glover left England to migrate to Australia, where three of his sons were living. He arrived on his sixty-fourth birthday and eventually settled on a property on the Nile River near Launceston, Tasmania. He was excited about what he found in Australia and worked enthusiastically to record his new environment.

The composition of *The River Nile, Van Diemen's Land, from Mr Glover's Farm* reflects links with the picturesque style and the work of Claude; however, you can also see how Glover adapted his painting style to the Australian environment. Glover observed that the Australian landscape is very open: you can see the distance through the trees. He noted that there was 'a remarkable peculiarity in the Trees in this Country; however numerous, they rarely prevent your tracing through them the whole distant Country.'¹⁹

Many of his Australian landscape paintings include images of Indigenous people. It was common in picturesque landscapes to include figures to add interest to a composition; however, Glover's interest in Indigenous people went beyond this. When he arrived in Tasmania, European settlement had devastated the population and traditional lifestyle of Tasmania's Indigenous people. Within a few years of his arrival, most had been deported to Flinders Island in Bass Strait. Although Glover had limited contact with Indigenous people, he wanted to create a record of the way of life they enjoyed before being disturbed. In *The River*

Nile, Van Diemen's Land, from Mr Glover's Farm, he depicts the Indigenous people enjoying an **idyllic** life, bathing in the clear river water, hunting and sitting around a campfire.

- 1 Imagine you are Glover and you are visiting an exhibition that includes *River Landscape with Tiburtine Temple at Tivoli* (p. 28) by your favourite artist, Claude. Make a sketch of the painting in your visual diary and add annotations to show what you admire about it. Remember Claude's paintings taught Glover a great deal about creating a picturesque style, so look for characteristics that could be linked to this style.
- 2 Compare the ideas that Glover and Malya Teamay (p. 80) communicate about Indigenous culture through their paintings. What reasons can you suggest for the differences you find between the two painters?

EXPLORE

Compare a painting by Glover of the European landscape with *The River Nile, Van Diemen's Land, from Mr Glover's Farm*. Consider the:

- subject matter
- composition
- use of art elements to describe the landscape's atmosphere and characteristics.

What do your observations reveal about how Glover adapted his painting style to suit the Australian environment?

CREATE

Design your own picturesque landscape based on a familiar landscape. Make sketches of the landscape's major features before you begin. Use the sketches as a reference to create a painting or paper collage in the picturesque style. When planning your composition, consider the conventions used in picturesque landscapes.



John Glover
born England 1767, arrived Australia 1831, died 1849
The River Nile, Van Diemen's Land, from Mr Glover's Farm, 1837
oil on canvas
76.4 × 114.6 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1956 (3359–4)

NEW ART FROM OLD

5.13

REVIEWING AND REWORKING THE PAST

Contemporary artists sometimes create new artworks by reviewing and reworking existing artworks to create new meanings and ideas.

Appropriation

Artists have often copied other artists' artworks to show homage or to learn more about their technique (pp. 168–9). Artists today still copy to pay **homage** but also to question or comment on the ideas associated with the artwork they are copying. Artists often present the copied artwork in an unexpected way to expose, question or add to an artwork's meaning.

The process of copying, reworking and re-presenting an existing artwork to create a new artwork is known as **appropriation**.

Anne Zahalka
Australian, b. 1957
The Sunbather No. 2, 1989
C-type photograph (edition of 20)
76 × 76 cm (image area)
Art Gallery of New South Wales
© Anne Zahalka. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



To appropriate something is to take it and make it your own.

Artists appropriate images and forms from many different sources, including the work of other artists, archives (such as historical photographs) and **popular culture** (such as movies and advertising). Appropriation became common in the 1980s when it was part of a broader questioning of widely accepted ideas, values and knowledge associated with **Postmodernism**.

A familiar image?

Does *The Sunbather No. 2* look familiar to you? If you have not seen this particular photograph before, you might have seen the photograph that it is based on, *Sunbaker* by Australian artist Max Dupain (p. 41). *Sunbaker* has become an important image in Australian culture. It is often seen as symbolic of an Australian type, the bronzed, athletic male, and a relaxed, outdoor lifestyle.

Australian artist **Anne Zahalka** (b. 1957) presents another way of thinking about this image in *The Sunbather No. 2*. In this work, she has appropriated the composition of Dupain's famous photograph and reworked it using a slimly built model with pale skin and red hair. The model could be male or female.

Sunbather No. 2 is one of a number of photographs that Zahalka has made by reworking artworks seen as typically Australian. Her models are women and people of different ages and diverse ethnic backgrounds to challenge the stereotypes present in the original images. Zahalka's work draws attention to the fact that many of the images often thought of as typically Australian feature certain types of people and exclude others.

By re-creating familiar images, Zahalka reminds you how images often only present a narrow view of the world.

DISCUSS

Why is it sometimes more powerful for artists to appropriate an existing artwork than to create something entirely new?

How does this type of copying differ from other types of copying, such as John Glover's (pp. 168–9)?

If a work includes appropriated images or forms, does this mean that the work is not original? Why?

What is originality in art? Is it important? Why?

- 1 Compare *The Sunbather No. 2* with *Sunbaker*. Suggest reasons for the images' similarities and differences.
- 2 Does *The Sunbather No. 2* alter the way you feel about *Sunbaker*? Why?

Connecting past and present

Australian artist **Leah King-Smith** (b. 1957) portrays an Aboriginal man in a landscape in #5. The image has a dream-like and ghostly quality. As the man's body merges with the landscape, he appears to be more spirit than flesh.

This image is from the series *Patterns of Connection*. King-Smith was inspired to make the series after working with the State Library of Victoria's collection of nineteenth-century photographs of Indigenous people. Most of these historical photographs were made as ethnographic studies for European collectors interested in images representing other cultures.

King-Smith was deeply disturbed by the images. The Indigenous people in the photographs were represented as types rather than as individuals. They were often represented in formal poses and settings that emphasised the fact that they were on display.

In the *Patterns of Connection* series, she reworked selected images by rephotographing them with her own painted and photographed landscapes. The resulting layered effect and the large size and glossy surface of her photographs give new life and meaning to the original images. The people represented are no longer on display as scientific or historical curiosities; a viewer sees their powerful presence in the landscape.

- 3 Look closely at #5. What clues are there that the original photograph represented the man in a formal pose or setting?
- 4 What does the representation of the man in #5 communicate to you about him? How does the image do this?
- 5 Discuss the value or role that you believe #5 has as:
 - a historical document
 - an artwork.



Leah King-Smith
Australian, b. 1957
#5 from *Patterns of Connection* series, 1991–92
Cibachrome photograph
© Leah King-Smith. Licensed
by Viscopy, 2016

- 6 Read about the Dreaming (p. 146) and suggest why King-Smith might have chosen to rework the historical images of Indigenous people to include images of the landscape.



CREATE

Think about a famous character and identify what the person is known for.

Find an image of the person (a painting or photograph) and appropriate it to create a new work. Your work should present the viewer with a new way of thinking about the person.

Consider how you can rework the original image to communicate your meaning.

You could use a computer software program to crop, cut or paint over selected areas of the image or to add other images.



DISCUSS

The *Patterns of Connection* series has been exhibited throughout Australia and overseas, and it is widely reproduced. What do you think it is that has made these images so interesting and appealing to a wide audience?

REALITY AND BEYOND

5.14

ILLUSIONS OF REALITY

Since ancient times, many artists have been interested in the challenge of creating an illusion of reality in their work.

Artists interested in representing the appearance of their subjects in a lifelike way use art materials and elements such as colour, shape and line to create artworks and visual effects that can be described as realistic.

Trompe l'oeil is a French term that means 'tricks the eye'. The term is widely used to describe images and forms that create a convincing illusion of reality.

A perfect illusion?

An ancient Greek story tells about a contest between two painters, Zeuxis and Parrhasius, to determine who could paint the most perfect **illusion** of the real world.

Zeuxis was very skilled in using colour, line and tone to create **realistic** effects, and he painted a **still life** so lifelike that birds pecked at the fruit; however, he had to admit defeat after he asked to remove a veil from the painting by Parrhasius. He discovered that the veil was painted on! While his painting had fooled the birds, the painting by Parrhasius had fooled the eyes of an artist.

Painters such as Zeuxis and Parrhasius created an illusion of reality by carefully observing and describing the colour, line and shadow seen in life. Since ancient times, artists have explored many techniques to

achieve realistic effects in their work. The development of **linear perspective** (p. 96) in the fifteenth century gave artists a valuable tool for creating a realistic illusion of three-dimensional space in two-dimensional work.

More recently, artists have used new technology, including photographic and digital technology and modern materials (such as silicone) to create remarkable illusions of reality in two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms.

Almost breathing

Old Woman in Bed by Australian artist **Ron Mueck** (b. 1958) presents an astonishing illusion of reality. The artist has observed and described the frail old woman with lifelike accuracy, including the texture and colour of her wispy, grey hair and pale, wrinkled skin

Photo: AGNSW 9.2.003



Ron Mueck
Australian, born England
1958
Old Woman in Bed, 2000–02
mixed media
25.4 × 94.0 × 53.9 cm
Art Gallery of New
South Wales
Purchased 2003
© Ron Mueck. Courtesy
Anthony d'Offay, London

and the form of her body curled up under the covers. Some people looking at the work have even been convinced that they can see her breathing.

Mueck's sculptures are so realistic that it is easy to think that they are a clever imitation of something the artist has seen; however, making art rarely involves just directly copying. In researching, making and presenting his work, Mueck determines how his artworks will look and the message they suggest.

One obvious way Mueck controls his work is through his use of scale; his sculptures are never life-size. While he has made a number of larger-than-life sculptures, *Old Woman in Bed* is significantly smaller than life-size.

The artist also carefully considers the expression and pose of his figures and the use of props. Can you see how attention is focused on the woman because of the contrast between her small, delicate face and the vast expanse of crisp white linen and woven cotton blanket that surrounds her? The linen and blanket are the types commonly found in nursing homes and hospitals. Can you imagine how the symbolic significance of the bedding would alter if the woman were sleeping in a bed made with old, patterned sheets and blankets?

A complex process

Mueck usually begins a sculpture by making **maquettes** (small models) to determine the pose and expression of his figure. He then determines the scale of his work and makes a clay model over a wire **armature** (frame). He uses photographs, models and even his own body for reference. This stage can take many months.

A **mould** is made from the model, and the figure is cast in resin or silicone. Resin is a hard material, while silicone is more flexible. Mueck often uses silicone for faces because it appears more like flesh and allows the artist to insert individual hairs for eyelashes and eyebrows. Blemishes and veins are hand painted.

- 1 Make a list of three trompe l'oeil effects you have seen in daily life, such as fake wood grain or marble. Where did you see each effect? How was it created? Why do you think it was used?
- 2 Suggest why artists and audiences are often fascinated by making and viewing highly realistic artworks.
- 3 List three things about *Old Woman in Bed* that you believe show evidence of Mueck's ability to accurately observe and describe detail.
- 4 *Old Woman in Bed* was inspired by Mueck's wife's much-loved grandmother during her final illness. Does this knowledge add to or change your understanding of the work? Explain why.



Ron Mueck
Old Woman in Bed, 2000–02
(detail)

EXPLORE

Identify a work by another artist that displays a convincing illusion of reality and that you find interesting. How has the artist used materials and art elements to create a convincing illusion of reality? What is it that interests you about the work?

DISCUSS

The incredibly realistic effects that Mueck achieves in his work have led some commentators to describe the style of Mueck's work as **hyperrealism**.

Find out what this term means. Is it a useful term to describe Mueck's work? Explain.

DISCUSS

While most people would not feel comfortable staring at a frail old woman, a dead man or a naked, pregnant woman in real life, they will often spend significant time closely examining Mueck's sculptures of such subjects.

Why do you think people do this? What does this add to your understanding of the role of art and the relationship between artworks and audience?

Mueck did not have formal art training; however, his parents were toymakers, and he often made his own toys as a child. Later, he made models and puppets for children's television, and he specialised in animatronics for the film industry and advertising. His art career began in 1996 after his mother-in-law, artist Paula Rego (b. 1935), asked him to make a model of Pinocchio. The model caught the attention of influential arts **patron** Charles Saatchi, who commissioned Mueck to make several more sculptures. Mueck's work has since been exhibited around the world.

REALITY AND BEYOND

5.15

REAL AND UNREAL

Some artists create realistic effects in their art but use them to construct a view of the world that is clearly unreal.

Magritte was only 12 years old when he began to study art.

In his early years, Magritte liked to write detective stories, although none of them have survived.

Surrealism

Surrealism began in Paris in the mid-1920s and has influenced many artists around the world since.

Surrealism literally means 'above reality'. The Surrealists created mysterious images and forms that defy conventional logic and suggest a strange, new reality. Many of the Surrealists were inspired by the world of dreams and the unconscious.

A visual riddle

The paintings of Belgian artist **René Magritte** (1898–1967) have sometimes been described as visual riddles. Can you see why when you look at *The Red Model*? Is it a painting of shoes, of feet, of shoes turning into feet or of feet turning into shoes?

In *The Red Model*, Magritte describes the colour, form and texture of familiar objects with clarity and realism; however, he presents objects in unexpected ways that question our understanding of **illusion** and reality. In many of his works, he combines opposites or explores the idea of **metamorphosis**, as seen in *The Red Model*. In other paintings, he makes puzzling uses of scale and form, such as a room filled with a giant rose, an elegant chair with a lion's tail, or a man with an apple head.

Magritte's work is often associated with Surrealism, but Magritte was more interested in an intellectual investigation of images than in creating images from dreams or the subconscious. He was particularly interested in the relationship between an image and what it represents. His paintings remind you that no matter how real something may look in a painting, what you are looking at is just a painting.

- 1 Name and describe three objects or surfaces in *The Red Model* that demonstrate how Magritte could paint colour, form and texture with clarity.
- 2 Magritte wanted his paintings to be a wake-up for those who looked at them. What do you think he meant by this?

Photo: Moderna Museet, Stockholm



René Magritte
Belgian, 1898–1967
Le Modèle Rouge (The Red Model), 1935
oil on canvas
72.0 × 48.5 cm
Moderna Museet, Stockholm
© René Magritte/ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016.



CREATE

Make a shoe-inspired artwork that uses a shoe, or shoes, in an imaginative and surprising way. Your aim should be to create the sort of visual wake-up that Magritte would have been proud of.

Use your imagination, perhaps by combining the shoes with something completely unexpected (for example, high heels with football spikes), by using a shoe in a surprising way (for example, as a hat or a telephone) or by creating a metamorphosis (for example, a shoe changing into a fish).

If your class creates two-dimensional images, you could use these to create a surreal catalogue of shoes. If you create three-dimensional artworks, you could surprise visitors to your school by creating an installation of a very interesting shoe shop.

In 2002, a huge image of *Overstepping* was displayed on a new public art site on the facade of an apartment building in the Melbourne CBD.

In this location, it was seen by thousands of people each day for several months. That there was a make-up store in the building, stocked with products designed to improve the appearance of women, added relevance to the message in Rrap's work.

A strange transformation

Overstepping by Australian artist **Julie Rrap** (b. 1950) portrays what appears to be a pair of perfectly formed feet, complete with red polished toenails, strangely transformed by high, fleshy stiletto heels. Could this be the result of the ultimate fashion makeover?

While Magritte questioned our understanding of reality and illusion in images, Rrap questions our understanding of reality and illusion in relation to the female figure. This is an increasingly important issue in an age when we are entertained by television shows about cosmetic surgery and surrounded by advertising and media images dominated by artificially perfect women.

Like a significant number of artists in recent decades, Rrap has been strongly influenced by **feminism**. Many of her works explore issues related to the representation of women in art. Her earlier work includes photographic collages based on famous paintings of women by male artists. In these works, she used images of her own body instead of the original figures. She rejects the gender stereotypes found in the original artworks and asserts individual female identity.

Digital technology is an important part of Rrap's art practice. As you can see in

Overstepping, technology allows her to create manipulated images with startlingly realistic effects that provoke a strong audience reaction.

- 3 What meaning does *Overstepping* suggest to you? What is it about the image that communicates the messages?
- 4 What clues can you find to show that *Overstepping* was made more recently than *The Red Model*? Consider techniques as well as the ideas explored in the artwork.
- 5 If you had the choice of owning one of these two images, which one would you choose and why?

In 2001, *Overstepping* won first prize in the Hermanns Art Award. The award was offered by a shoe retailer to designers or artists who created a shoe-inspired artwork.

Rrap's brother Mike Parr (pp. 116–17) is also an artist. Rrap is Parr spelt backwards.



Julie Rrap
Australian, b. 1950
Overstepping, 2001
digital photograph (edition of 15)
120 × 120 cm
© Julie Rrap. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

ATTRACTION TO ABSTRACTION

5.16

WHAT IS ABSTRACT ART?

Art that has few or no references to real objects, places or people is often described as **abstract art**.

Abstract art is a general term used to describe a wide range of artworks that do not appear lifelike or **realistic**.

Much of Tuckson's life was dedicated to his work at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, where he was deputy director from the 1950s until his death in 1973. In this role, he became an advocate for Indigenous Australian art.

Although he had limited time to devote to art-making, Tuckson made 450 paintings and more than 10 000 drawings.

Figurative and non-figurative

In figurative abstraction, the subject matter is recognisable, but art elements are used in such a manner that the subject matter's appearance seems simplified, distorted or changed in some way. The simplification, **distortion** or change can be slight or extreme. When extreme, it can be difficult to recognise what is represented.

Some abstract artworks are arrangements of art elements (such as colour, line and materials) without any obvious reference to objects, places or people. These artworks are often described as **non-figurative art**, **non-representational art** or **pure abstraction**.

DISCUSS

All art involves some degree of abstraction. Discuss, referring to examples to support your opinion.

1 Make three simple abstract drawings. Use art elements differently in each drawing to create:

- a figurative abstract drawing where the abstraction is slight
- a figurative abstract drawing where the abstraction is extreme, using the same subject as above
- a non-figurative abstract drawing.

A focus on expression

In some forms of abstraction, art elements and materials are used in **gestural** and **expressive** ways that convey emotion and the action of the artist. This approach to abstraction was reflected in **Abstract Expressionism**, a **modern art** style that came to prominence in New York in the 1940s and 1950s. Abstract Expressionist paintings are generally non-representational, but some include figurative elements.

At first glance, *Yellow* by Australian artist **Tony Tuckson** (1921–1973) may appear to be a series of random brushstrokes and accidental drips on masonite board. It seems to have no reference to anything in the real world, but what you see, the paint and the expressive way it is used, provides the key to its meaning and significance.

The asymmetrical composition of the painting is dominated by a hovering, fragile mass of white and yellow tones. These are painted with bold, vigorous strokes that sweep down and across the painting. The thinness of the paint makes the direction and intensity of each stroke clearly visible. Delicate drips

Tony Tuckson

born Egypt 1921, arrived Australia 1942, died 1973
Yellow, 1970–73

synthetic polymer and enamel paint on composition board

(a–b) 213.5 × 244.0 cm (overall)

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Loti Smorgon AO and Victor Smorgon AC, 2011 (2011.336.a–b)

© Tony Tuckson. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



and splatters of red, black and white paint concentrated in several areas of the composition provide a contrast to the larger mass of paint. The potency of the painted marks is intensified by the areas of raw masonite board that remain untouched by paint.

The painted marks in *Yellow* are a trace of the physical presence, movement and energy of the artist when he was making the painting. They create a strong connection between the artist and the viewer.

Tuckson's interest in abstraction had many influences, including a deep appreciation of the **aesthetic qualities** of Indigenous Australian art as well as modern art styles such as Abstract Expressionism.

- 2 List at least six descriptive words or phrases that describe the paint marks you can see in *Yellow*.
- 3 In what way are the painted marks in *Yellow* a trace of the physical presence, movement and energy of the artist? How does this connect the artist with the viewer?

Purely formal

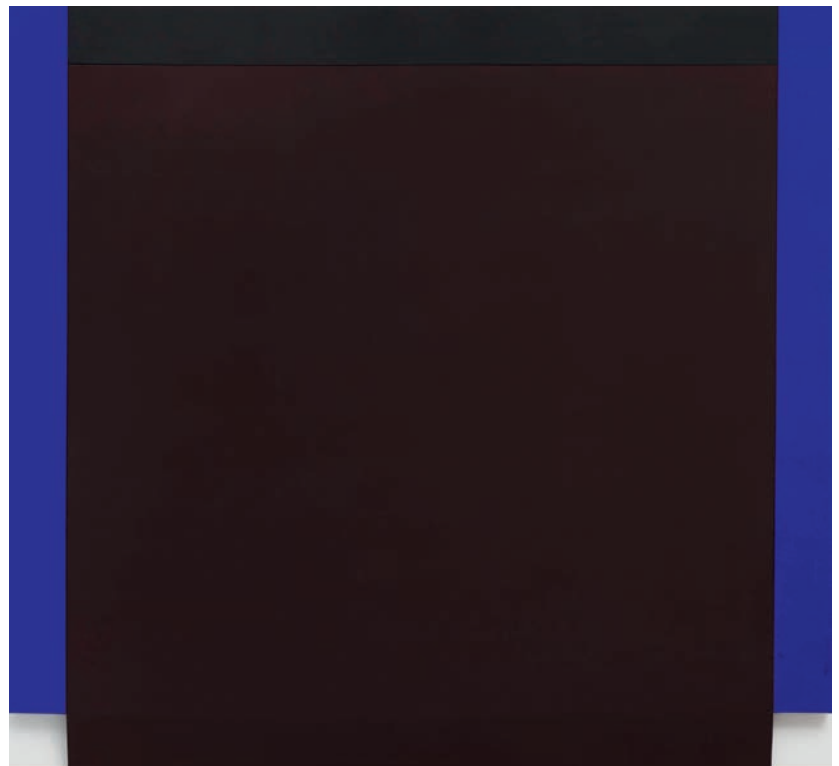
In some forms of abstraction, the **formal** qualities of art, including materials and art elements, became the focus of art-making. This approach to abstraction was reflected in non-representational styles such as **Minimal art**, **Hard Edge painting** and **Colour Field painting**. These styles, which dominated modern art in the 1960s, reflected a belief that modern art should focus purely on formal concerns, not on representation, description or expressing emotion. For painting, this idea meant a focus on colour and the flat surface and shape of the canvas. For sculpture, it meant a focus on form. Australian artist **Michael Johnson** (b. 1938) was one of many Australian artists in the 1960s who were interested in non-representational art styles focused on the formal concerns of painting.

Frontal 2 is a boldly simple painting made up of two modular panels. It reflects the artist's interest in manipulating the spatial dimensions of painting through colour and colour relationships. The simple **geometric**

shapes, compositional order, smooth flat colour and focus on the structural concerns of painting are a contrast to more expressive, personal styles of abstraction.

- 4 List six descriptive words or phrases that describe aspects of *Frontal 2*.
- 5 Compare *Frontal 2* with *Yellow*. Consider the use of materials and art elements, and the ideas, meanings or feelings each work conveys.
- 6 Imagine you are a gallery guide talking to a group of teenage students about either *Yellow* or *Frontal 2*. Write a script for how you will introduce the artwork to the students. Include at least four questions or comments that you anticipate the students will ask or say (such as 'It looks like a kid did it' and 'If I did that, would you buy mine?') and how you will respond to them.

Frontal 2 was one of two paintings by Johnson that were included in the landmark exhibition *The Field*. *The Field* was presented at the National Gallery of Victoria when it reopened in a new building in 1968, and it was the first major exhibition of work by Australian artists working in **non-figurative** and geometric art styles, such as **Minimal art**, **Hard Edge painting** and **Colour Field painting**.



Michael Johnson
Australian, b. 1938
Frontal 2, 1968
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
198.5 × 214.0 cm
Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of Michael and Margot Johnson, 2000
© Michael Johnson. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Photo: AGNSW 88:2000

MAKING IT PERSONAL

While the history of art is often analysed by studying styles, periods and movements, in reality, the work of artists is often very personal, as seen in the work of many artists interested in abstraction.

Rooney used graph paper to draw the design for the *Superknit* series. A cardboard template was used to create the repeated curves. Like many **Hard Edge** painters, Rooney used masking tape to help achieve the crisp, clean edges in his work. The areas that were masked are the white areas of the painting.

Both **Hard Edge** painting and **Minimal art** use art elements such as geometric shape and colour in a controlled, precise way. In **Minimal art**, the elements are kept to a minimum. For example, a painting might have only one or two colours and one or two shapes. The elements are often repeated to create a regular pattern.

Harper was one of a group of Melbourne-based artists involved in an important artist-run space, *Store 5* (1989–93). The group, which also included Kerrie Poliness (p. 27) and Constanze Zikos (p. 151), shared an interest in geometric abstraction.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see other works by Harper.

Robert Rooney
Australian, b. 1937
Superknit 5, 1970
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
152.5 × 244.0 cm
National Gallery of Australia,
Canberra
Purchased 1979
Image courtesy of the artist
and Tolarno Galleries

A familiar pattern?

Robert Rooney (b. 1937) was one of many Australian artists in the 1960s and early 1970s interested in **non-representational art** styles, such as **Hard Edge painting** and **Minimal art**.

Can you see how these art styles might have influenced *Superknit 5*? Strong, simple shapes and colours are clearly the focus of the painting; the repetition of elements in a regular pattern across the composition emphasises their importance. The clearly defined hard edges and smooth, flat paint surface focus attention on the shapes and colours in the painting.

The repetition in *Superknit 5* and the smooth paint surface make the painting appear very flat. **Western art** has often been concerned with creating an illusion of three-dimensional space on a flat surface (p. 96). In contrast, many **modern art** styles place importance on acknowledging the flat surface of a painting.

While Rooney was interested in **non-representational art** styles, such as **Hard**

Edge painting and **Minimal art**, he took inspiration for his work from the patterns of everyday things.

You can probably guess from the title what inspired *Superknit 5*. Rooney is fascinated by pictures or diagrams that look like abstract art. The *Superknit* series was obviously inspired by knitting patterns. Before this series, the artist made a number of **Hard Edge** paintings inspired by designs on household packages.

- 1 In what way can *Superknit 5* be seen as a personal interpretation of **Hard Edge** painting and **Minimal art** styles?

Keeping abstraction alive

Melinda Harper (b. 1965) often works on several paintings at once, but each painting can require months of work. She works on one section of a painting at a time, using masking tape to stop the colours bleeding into each other. Once the paint is dry, another area is started. The colour relationships and visual rhythms in the painting evolve slowly as the artist works. Unlike many other forms



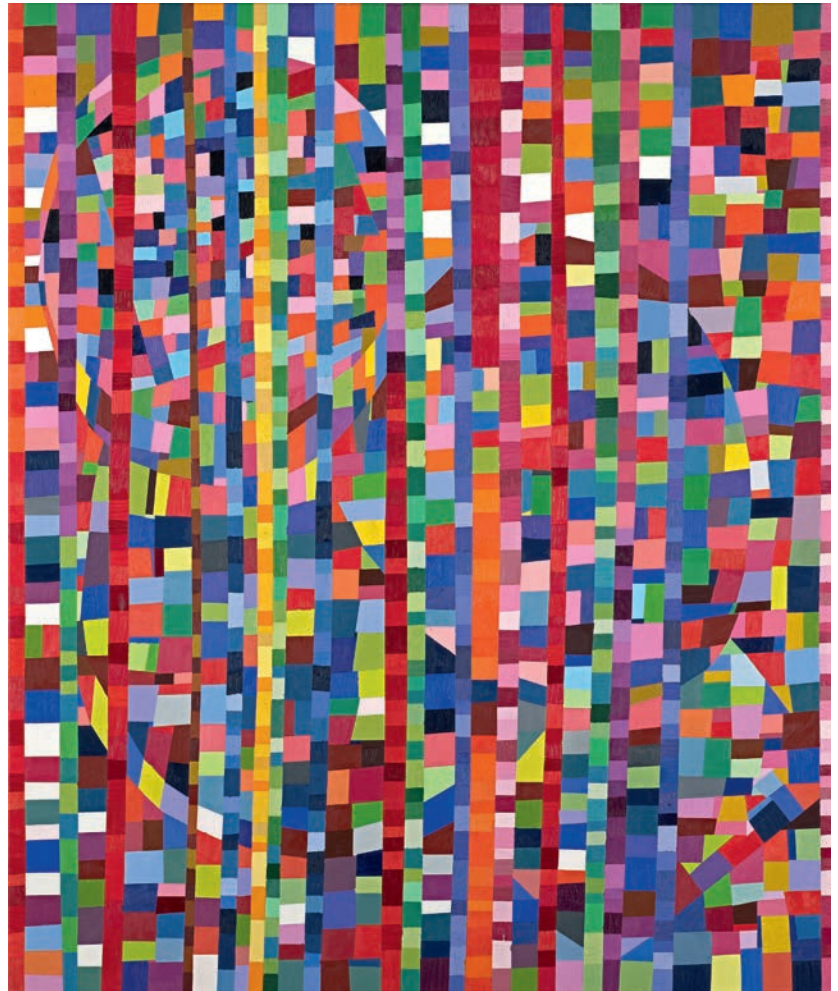
of **geometric** abstraction, Harper's paintings retain obvious brushstrokes and a distinctive handmade quality.

As a teenager, Harper was inspired to become an artist after seeing original artworks by some of the early **Abstract Expressionist** artists, such as Hans Hofmann (1880–1966) and Jackson Pollock (pp. 210–11), in the newly opened National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. She has maintained a commitment to abstract art throughout her career, and she has explored colour and colour relationships in dynamic geometric compositions of dazzling beauty.

In *Untitled* (2000), irregular vertical stripes interwoven with large circles and other geometric shapes create an idiosyncratic grid-like structure that is filled with a mosaic of brilliant colours. The colours jostle against each other, creating a restless energy.

The artist draws inspiration for her work from looking at other art and observing things in her everyday environment, including colours and colour relationships.

- 2 List six descriptive words or phrases (such as multihued stripes) that describe *Untitled* (2000).
- 3 Compare the artists' approach to abstraction in *Superknit 5* and *Untitled* (2000).



Melinda Harper
Australian, b. 1965
Untitled, 2000
oil on canvas
183.0 × 152.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented through the NGV Foundation by Robert
Gould, Founder Benefactor, 2004 (2004.358)
© Melinda Harper. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see Hans Hofmann's *Pre-dawn* (1960), which left a strong impression on Harper.

EXPLORE

A well-known art collector, Ms Abby Straction, wants you to recommend a new non-figurative artwork for her collection. Identify a work for her, and write a short report indicating why you think it is a good choice.

EXPLORE

Down the length of an A4 page, create a scale with non-representational or non-figurative art at one end and realistic, representational or figurative art at the other. Plot the artworks pictured in units 5.14 to 5.17 on this scale. Then, add any two other artworks from this book.

Compare your scale with others in the class. Are the artworks plotted in roughly the same order and position? What might account for any differences?

CREATE

Make a non-representational, two-dimensional artwork using a repetitive pattern with a limited number of interesting shapes and colours.

Try to find inspiration for your shapes in your everyday environment. You could use a viewfinder to isolate or frame interesting shapes on packages, fabrics or coloured papers. Consider how you can rotate, alternate and repeat shapes to create an interesting pattern.

Depending on the medium you work with, you may want to create a **stencil** or a template of your shapes to help you create the repetitions in your design. Use a limited number of colours, and consider how **harmonious** or **complementary colours** (p. 68) may be used.

WHAT IS THE IDEA?

5.18

IDEAS MATTER

The value and importance of an artwork is not always in the making. The idea or concept can sometimes be the most important thing about an artwork.

Duchamp invented ready-mades in 1914 when he exhibited a bottle rack that he had purchased at a bazaar.

Duchamp's provocative ideas about art did not stop at ready-made sculptures. He proposed making reciprocal ready-mades – where a famous work of art could be used as an everyday object. He thought a Rembrandt painting would make a good ironing board!

In 1999, Dimitri Daskalopoulos paid US\$1.76 million for one of the 1964 versions of *Fountain*. He said, 'For me, it represents the origins of contemporary art.'²⁰

DISCUSS

Duchamp's original *Fountain* is lost; however, in 1964 a limited edition of eight handcrafted urinals was produced, each signed and dated by the artist to emulate the original.

Some people felt that Duchamp had compromised his original ideas. Others argued that it was perfectly valid and could even be seen as reinforcing some of the ideas in the original ready-made. What do you think?

Ready-made art

To create his artwork *Fountain*, French-American artist **Marcel Duchamp** (1887–1968) took an ordinary porcelain urinal, signed it 'R. Mutt' (the name of a plumbing manufacturer), titled it and exhibited it. It is an artwork because Duchamp presented it as an artwork. Duchamp called this type of artwork a **ready-made**.

The idea of making art by simply selecting an object and exhibiting it as art sounds very easy. Duchamp's ready-mades demonstrate that powerful ideas can be communicated in art without using conventional art materials and processes.

The concepts behind Duchamp's ready-mades are radical and provocative. By presenting an existing object as art, especially a mundane, mass-produced object such as a urinal, Duchamp claimed that artworks do not have to be unique, valuable or beautiful. Furthermore, he challenged the idea that making art involves special materials or skills.

When Duchamp first exhibited *Fountain* in 1917, many people were still struggling to accept that humble objects were subjects worthy of art. Imagine how they felt about humble objects being declared artworks in their own right! Duchamp's ideas have had a profound influence on the way people think about art today. When artists use **found**

objects to make art, and when we understand that found objects can be art, we owe something to Duchamp.

Duchamp was closely associated with the **Dada** movement, which



Marcel Duchamp
French-American, 1887–1968
Fountain, 1917/64
ceramic
The Israel Museum, Jerusalem,
Israel
© Succession Marcel Duchamp/
ADAGP. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

began in Europe around 1916. The writers, poets and artists associated with Dada were appalled by the horrors of the First World War and disillusioned by contemporary society, which they blamed for the war. They rejected traditional artforms because they saw them as part of the society that they despised. They took a radical, new anti-art approach that challenged traditional social and artistic values.

- 1 List two ideas about art that *Fountain* suggests to you. What is it about the work that suggests these ideas?
- 2 Do you think that audiences today are likely to react to *Fountain* in a way that is similar to or different from audiences in 1917? Why?

An interesting concept

Secret Painting by English artist **Mel Ramsden** (b. 1944) has two parts. One part is a small, square, completely black painting that looks like the sort of **non-representational art** that was common in **modern art** in the 1960s and early 1970s (pp. 176–7).

The second part of *Secret Painting* is a panel that declares that only the artist knows what is in the painting – and he is not telling anyone. It boldly denies the viewer the opportunity to find any meaning in the work. *Secret Painting* appears to be questioning how non-representational art styles communicate meaning and how viewers find meaning in these styles.

DISCUSS

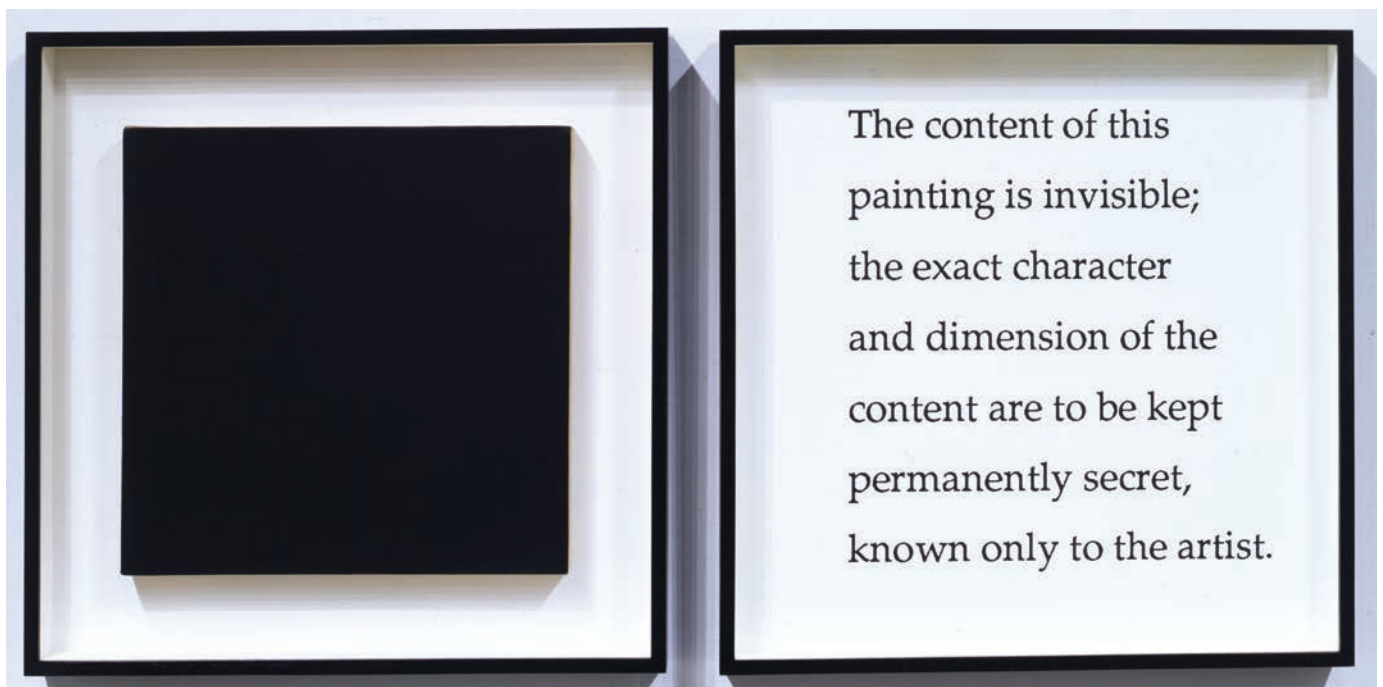
Although artists associated with Conceptual art make artworks that question the value of art and art institutions, their work is often highly valued, collected and displayed in galleries. Is this surprising? Why?

Secret Painting is an example of **Conceptual art**, a term used to describe artworks that focus on ideas rather than description, personal expression or formal concerns. Artists associated with Conceptual art explore many ideas about art itself, including ideas related to self-expression and originality in art, the relationship between the viewer and art, and how art is marketed and exhibited.

Conceptual art became an important **art movement** in the 1970s; however, a significant number of artists before this time, including Duchamp, also created artwork that can be described as conceptual.

- 3 List two ideas about art that *Secret Painting* suggests to you. What is it about the work that suggests these ideas?
- 4 What is your reaction to the written message in *Secret Painting*? What is it in the message that makes you react this way?
- 5 Why do you think Ramsden used words in *Secret Painting*? What might it suggest about the relationship between words and art?

Mel Ramsden
English, born England 1944;
lived in Australia 1963–64
Secret Painting, 1967–68
Art & Language series
acrylic on canvas and photostat
102 × 100 × 4 cm (installed)
© Art & Language. Courtesy
Lisson Gallery



WHAT IS THE IDEA?

5.19

QUESTIONING TRADITION AND CONVENTION

Questions and ideas that challenge traditions and conventions in art-making are the focus of some artists' practices.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to view the collection of works by Fontana in The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Lucio Fontana
Italian, 1899–1968
Spatial Concept (Concetto Spaziale), 1964–65
metallic paint on canvas
91.0 × 73.5 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased 1973 (EA3–1973)
© Lucio Fontana/SIAE.
Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Space explorer

Argentinian-Italian artist **Lucio Fontana** (1899–1968) began his career as a sculptor. He later became interested in ideas about the relationship between art and space, and these ideas took his work in new and radical directions.

Fontana's early experiments included **installations** in darkened environments that attempted to dissolve the boundaries between objects and their surrounding space; however, it was his Spatial Concept series, begun in 1949, that achieved his goals. The series was made using the conventional painting format of a rectangular canvas, but Fontana punctured the surface with a knife to create a series of holes (*buchi*). The hole was the

solution! The void of the hole created the authentic connection between the art object and its surrounding space that Fontana was looking for. In 1950, Fontana introduced a new style to his Spatial Concept series using slashes (*tagli*) rather than holes.

It is tempting to read the repeated puncture marks or slashes in the series as violent or to link them with the **gestural** marks of **Abstract Expressionism** (p. 176). For Fontana, however, these works were an exploration of space that opened up new creative possibilities in art. Although he often painted the surface of the Spatial Concept works, or inscribed them with lines that may suggest pictorial references (as seen in the example pictured), Fontana rejected the idea that his Spatial Concept works were paintings.

- 1 What features or qualities does *Spatial Concept (Concetto Spaziale)* share with a painting? What makes it different from a painting?
- 2 Write a label that will be mounted on the wall beside *Spatial Concept (Concetto Spaziale)* to explain the artwork to gallery visitors.

Creative force

How do you imagine London-based Spanish artist **Angela de la Cruz** (b. 1965) created *Loose Fit (Blue)*? Smashing, squashing and punching are all possible, although these are not actions conventionally associated with creating a painting.

The work provokes many questions, including whether it is even a painting. It hangs on the wall like a painting, and it is made from canvas with paint on it, but it has a three-dimensional form.

Loose Fit (Blue) and other works by de la Cruz clearly have links to abstract art styles such as **Colour Field painting**, **Hard Edge painting** and **Minimal art**. Some connections have also been made between



the physical actions involved in creating these paintings and the gestural techniques of Abstract Expressionism.

In de la Cruz's work, these celebrated **modern art** styles emerge broken and beaten. The blue-painted canvas with its white border suggests that *Loose Fit (Blue)* previously existed as a large-scale **monochromatic** painting. Now, the stretchers that once held the canvas taut and flat have buckled, and the canvas sags in a crumpled mess. While this suggests violent and brutal force, de la Cruz sees humour in her work.

De la Cruz's work also suggests emotions, which were denied by the 'cool' and unemotional precision, geometry and flat surfaces of many forms of abstraction. The sagging folds and crumpled surface of *Loose Fit (Blue)* appear tragic and dejected. Her work also has connections to the human body; the title alludes to oversized clothing.

How de la Cruz's works are displayed sometimes adds to their meaning. For example, a small, scuffed white painting, *Ashamed* (1995), was displayed 'cowering' in the corner of a gallery.

De la Cruz's paintings playfully challenge many conventions and traditions associated with abstract art and painting in general.

- 3 List verbs (action words, such as smash and punch) that describe how you think de la Cruz created *Loose Fit (Blue)*.
- 4 List adjectives (describing words, such as dejected and broken) that describe emotions and ideas you associate with *Loose Fit (Blue)*.
- 5 De la Cruz's work is often linked to Fontana's. Use a Venn diagram to show similarities and differences in the artists' work.

DISCUSS

De la Cruz has said, 'I like the idea of paintings behaving badly. My work knows very well that it has to be in an institution but they rebel against that, and they do what they like.'²¹

What do you think she means by this statement?

As an artist interested in exploring the boundaries of space in art, Fontana was also inspired by contemporary expeditions into real space. He was fascinated by the launch of the world's first artificial satellite, *Sputnik 1*, by the USSR in 1957 and the launch of *Explorer 1* by the United States in 1958, which triggered the space race between the two nations.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see other work by de la Cruz and to watch a video of the artist speaking about her art practice and work in progress.



Angela de la Cruz
Spanish, b. 1965
Loose Fit (Blue), 2002
oil on canvas
111.3 × 112.5 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through the NGV Foundation
with the assistance of Michael Buxton,
Governor, and Anna Schwartz, Governor,
2003 (2003.479)
© Angela de la Cruz. Courtesy Anna
Schwartz Gallery

QUESTIONS AND IDEAS

Beauty is an important aspect of art. When exploring art, it is important to consider how beauty is defined and judged.

The *Discobolus* pictured is one of 20 surviving Roman copies of an original bronze sculpture, now lost, by the Greek sculptor Myron. A copy in The British Museum has been repaired with the head from another sculpture, which is looking down.

The Greek phrase *kalos kagathos* is used to describe the idea that physical beauty is connected to goodness and virtue.

The chief forms of beauty are order, symmetry and clear delineation.'

Aristotle

'Beauty of style and harmony and grace and good rhythm depend on simplicity.'

Plato (*The Republic*)

What is beauty?

Beauty is commonly associated with sensory pleasure and satisfaction, and especially with things that are pleasing to look at; however, people can experience beauty through all of their senses – hearing, taste, touch and smell as well as sight.

Beauty can also be appreciated through the intellect and emotions. It is possible, for example, to find beauty in literature or poetry, in something that you perceive as visually ugly but find deeply moving, and in the apparent simplicity of a mathematical formula that solves a complex problem.

- 1 List things that you personally find beautiful. Include things that you experience through each of the five senses as well as things that you find beautiful intellectually or emotionally.

Alamy Stock Photo/Lev Tsimblor



Myron
Discobolus (Discus Thrower)
Roman copy of an ancient Greek bronze, c. 450 BCE

Beauty, art and aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy that explores questions and ideas about art and beauty. These have been discussed and debated since ancient times, but they remain relevant today.

Artworks are often described as having particular aesthetic qualities, which are the visual or other qualities that elicit a response. The **aesthetic qualities** of an artwork generally relate to the use of:

- art elements – such as colour, shape, form and texture
- design principles – such as balance, harmony and **unity**
- materials.

Our responses to the aesthetic qualities of an artwork can be sensory, emotional or intellectual. In some artworks, elements such as sound and movement are important.

The word 'aesthetic' is also sometimes used to describe qualities or styles considered beautiful in different historical periods or by different cultures or subcultures. For example, a modern aesthetic may reflect ideas of beauty associated with modern art, including strong simplified shapes, lines and forms. A Japanese aesthetic may reflect the elegance and subtlety of Japanese art and design. A street art aesthetic may reflect the style of different forms of graffiti art.

- 2 Think about a style or trend in any of the arts – such as visual arts, design, dance, drama or music – that interests you. Describe the distinctive qualities that characterise this style's sense of aesthetics. Collect images to illustrate your points.

Perfect beauty

The ancient Greeks aspired to beauty in every aspect of their lives. Ancient Greek philosophers were among the earliest to identify principles that they believed defined beauty. These principles are reflected in many examples of ancient Greek art and architecture.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to discover why the brain sees mathematics as beauty.

Inspired by the perfect human form of their immortal gods and goddesses, the ancient Greeks valued the perfect human form in life and art. Physical beauty was linked to virtue and goodness, and beauty was celebrated in athletic competitions and festivals. Artists studied anatomy, **proportion** and movement to create images of ideal types.

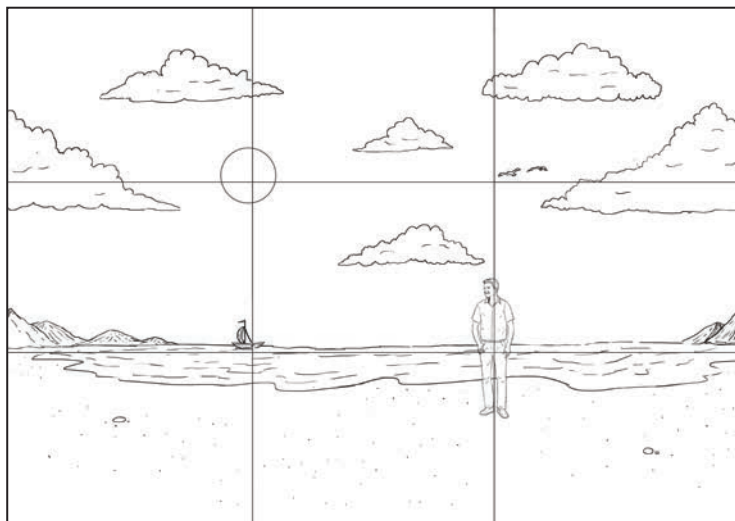
Male figures tended to be muscular and athletic, while female figures were graceful but strong. *Discobolus* combines the ideal of an athletic male figure with the harmony and balance that characterised Greek art of the fourth and fifth centuries BCE. Although the athlete in *Discobolus* is shown in a movement that would require extreme physical exertion, the lines and arrangement of the athlete's body create a flowing visual rhythm, harmony and balance. The athlete's face also reflects a serene beauty.

The beauty of ancient Greek art later inspired many **Renaissance** artists and created an ideal of classical beauty that has been influential in **western art** since.

- 3 Create an annotated copy of *Discobolus* to explain how you believe Myron:
 - communicated the ideal of the athletic male figure
 - achieved harmony and balance.

A beauty secret

The ancient Greeks believed that the secret of beauty was, at least partly, in mathematics. They noticed the **golden ratio** in many beautiful things – in nature, in art and in the ideal proportions of the human body and face.



Artists often use the rule of thirds to organise elements in their compositions.

The grid lines in golden ratio rectangles and grids, and the points at which they intersect, can be used as a guide to creating visually pleasing compositions. Many artists apply this ratio intuitively in their work.

Artists often approximate the golden ratio by following the rule of thirds: dividing a composition into thirds horizontally and vertically. It is generally thought that locating a focal point on the lines or at the intersection of the lines creates a more interesting composition than a central focal point.

EXPLORE

Research ideals of male or female beauty in another culture or historical period. Summarise your findings.

Identify an artwork from the culture or period that reflects the ideal, and briefly describe why it is a reflection of the ideal for that culture or period.

DISCUSS

Are there dominant ideals of human beauty in contemporary society? What are the ideals, who defines them and how are they communicated? Are they any more or less realistic than those formulated by the ancient Greeks?

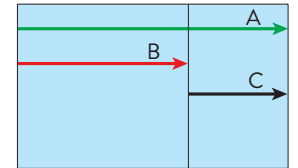
Socrates advised combining the most beautiful features of different human figures to best portray ideal beauty. How does his advice relate to the way ideal beauty is portrayed in contemporary society?

The golden ratio is based on one very special number, a decimal usually rounded to 1.618.

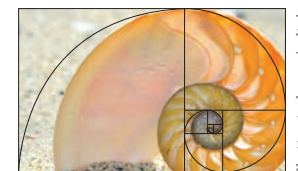


The golden ratio can be illustrated using lines. Line A is made up of two parts: a longer section B and a shorter section C. The ratio of the length of A to B is the same as the ratio of the length of B to C. This can also be thought of as $A = B \times 1.618$ and $B = C \times 1.618$.

The golden ratio is also seen in golden rectangles. As above, the ratio of A to B is the same as the ratio of B to C.



The golden ratio can be used again and again to divide the rectangle on the right. This process can be repeated indefinitely. The effect of this is illustrated in the simple golden ratio grid below. From the grid can be drawn a golden spiral, which is seen in many natural forms.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about the golden ratio and rectangles.

The golden ratio is referred to by many different terms, including the golden mean, the divine section, the golden proportion and phi Φ .

OBJECTS OF BEAUTY

Different cultures' ideas about beauty can be seen in the objects they value.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to Princeton University Art Museum's interactive site that allows you to design a Song dynasty vase.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Shigaraki pottery and the Japanese tea ceremony.

Shinto is the traditional religion of Japan. It dates back to the eighth century and was the official religion until 1945. Unlike most other religions, Shinto does not have a founder or sacred scriptures. Practices include the worship of spirits (*kami*) who are believed to be present in objects and processes in the natural world.

It has been suggested that if Kent had been entombed in the traditional Chinese manner, this vase would have been buried with him.

Cultural and historical influences

Ideas about beauty are influenced by culture and history. People's cultural beliefs – including their religious or spiritual beliefs, their cultural practices and traditions, and even their physical environment – can influence their ideas about beauty and what is beautiful. Within any culture, ideas about beauty evolve over time.

What any one person values as beautiful will also be influenced by their personal experiences and beliefs.

Beauty in simplicity

Herbert Wade Kent (1877–1952) chose the things he collected for their beauty. While living in China, he developed an appreciation for the elegant simplicity of Song dynasty pottery (960–1279). The vase pictured was his favourite **ceramic** piece. Kent's wife donated it to the National Gallery of Victoria after his death.

The refined beauty, balance and vigour of Song dynasty pottery is seen in this vase. The **glaze** highlights the sensual form of the vase. Rings, just visible under the surface of the

glaze, create a subtle play of light around the vase. Subtle imperfections, including some delicate veins of rust in the glaze, animate the surface.

The stoneware ceramics of this period are also known to appeal to multiple senses. They are cool and smooth to touch, and they emit a musical sound when tapped gently.

Traditional Chinese philosophies value the beauty and purity of the natural world. This particular style of vase was made for holding plum blossoms in spring.

Beauty in imperfection

The Japanese jar pictured on the next page was made at Shigaraki, one of the six ancient kiln sites where pottery production was concentrated between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries in Japan.

The robust form and earthy textures and colours of this pottery jar reflect strong connections to the natural world. Shigaraki clay has a warm orange colour and a rough texture. The intense heat of the traditional wood-fired kilns resulted in subtle colour and texture variations, which give Shigaraki pots their distinctive character.

Reverence for nature is an important aspect of Shinto, the traditional Japanese religion. The surface of Shigaraki pots suggest natural textures and elements, such as water flowing over rock.

The simple, handmade, rustic beauty of this vase also reflects one of the principles of Japanese aesthetics: *wabi-sabi*, which is beauty found in imperfection and in things that are old or worn.



Vase
Chinese, 11th – early 12th century
stoneware (Cizhou ware)
23.1 × 17.4 cm (diameter)
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Gift of Mrs HW Kent, 1952
(273–D5)

EXPLORE

Briefly explain the origins and purpose of the Japanese tea ceremony. What do you think Japanese tea masters found beautiful about Shigaraki pottery?



Jar (*Tsubo*)
 Japanese, 15th–16th century
 stoneware (Shigaraki ware)
 46.0 × 42.8 cm (diameter)
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria
 with the assistance of CRA Limited, Fellow, 1984
 (AS1–1984)



Tile
 Greater Iran, 15th century
 fritware, glazed, cut to shape and assembled as a
 mosaic
 61.6 × 59.7 × 7.0 cm
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art
 The Madina Collection of Islamic Art
 Gift of Camilla Chandler Frost

Digital image © 2016 Museum Associates/LACMA. Licensed by Art Resource, NY

Beauty in pattern

Islamic art often features complex and beautiful abstract designs and patterns.

Stylised plant forms and complex **geometric** designs are characteristic of the decorative patterns that adorn many Islamic buildings, ceramics, textiles and metalwork.

Calligraphy is considered the highest artform in Islam, reflecting the importance of the word of God. Beautiful writing and decoration were a way of making words worthy of divine messages.

The Iranian ceramic tile illustrated here was made around the fifteenth century. Over hundreds of years, tiling became a refined and sophisticated artform in Islamic culture. Skilled **artisans** often worked with mathematicians to develop new designs. Many great religious buildings were constructed throughout the Islamic empires, and the buildings were generally made from brick but covered in a skin of brilliantly glazed tiles.

Can you see how the stylised plant forms used in the decoration of the tile have an elegant symmetry and order? This demonstrates the importance of geometry in creating beauty in Islamic design. The geometric shape of the tile would have interlocked with other tiles or panels to become part of a larger, more complex, design on a wall.

- 1 Create an annotated copy of each of the three objects. Note the elements and design principles that are most important in each of the objects.
- 2 Which of these objects do you think is the most beautiful? Why?
- 3 Find a historical or contemporary object that you find beautiful.
 - Explain the qualities that you believe make your chosen object beautiful.
 - Ask two other people of different ages or backgrounds whether they find the object beautiful and why. Summarise their responses.



CREATE

Research Islamic pattern and decoration, and how it uses mathematics. Use your research findings as inspiration for a beautiful, decorative tile that incorporates stylised plant or geometric elements.

Design the shape and decoration of your tile so that it can be linked to other similar tiles as part of a larger design. Make a sketch to show how your larger design will work.



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> for information and activities about Islamic art and the mathematics behind Islamic designs and patterns.

Islam originated in the Middle East in the seventh century when the word of God (Allah) was revealed to the prophet Mohammed (c. 570–632). The sacred words of God were recorded in the *Qur'an*, the holy book that guides Muslim faith and life. Islam spread quickly through the Middle East and beyond and is now one of the world's major religions.

Arabesque designs are decorative, curving linear patterns, usually based on the forms of plants or other inanimate objects.