



Amanda Marburg
Australian, b. 1976
Garden, 2002
oil on linen
181.0 × 120.5 cm
Private collection
Courtesy of the
artist and Sutton
Gallery

3

ART ELEMENTS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Colour, line, shape, tone, form and texture are art elements. You will already know something about these elements because you see them every day in the world around you.

Artists organise the art elements in an artwork using design principles, including balance, unity, variety, rhythm, focal point and space.

Understanding art elements and design principles will help you discover more about the artworks you investigate.

Art elements and design principles are an important part of the visual language used by artists. Artists use art elements and design principles to explore ideas and to convey meaning. When you investigate how an artist uses art elements and design principles in an artwork, you discover clues that will help your understanding of the artwork.

Learn about:

- art elements and design principles
- how artists use art elements and design principles to explore ideas and to convey meaning.

Learn by:

- comparing, analysing, evaluating, interpreting and reflecting on artworks from a range of cultural and historical contexts
- discussing and communicating ideas and opinions about art
- creating and displaying your own artwork.

3.1

A WORLD OF COLOUR

Colour is an important part of the world. Imagine a world in black and white. It would be dull and uninteresting. A colourless world would also have practical problems – think about how colour helps you to identify things (such as coloured folders for different subjects) and communicates important ideas (such as red for danger).

Colour is an important element in many artworks. Learning about colour will help you understand the important role that colour can play in expressing experiences, ideas and feelings.

Talk about colour

When creating and viewing art, it is useful to know some of the terms commonly used to differentiate and describe colours.

Primary, secondary and tertiary colours

Using a colour wheel and experimenting with paint is a useful way to learn about colour. You only need three colours to start with: red, yellow and blue. These are the **primary colours**. You cannot make a primary colour by mixing other colours; however, you can use different combinations of primary colours to create a rainbow of other colours.

Mixing two primary colours will create a **secondary colour**. There are three secondary colours: orange, violet and green. On a colour wheel, the secondary colours can be found between the primary colours they are made from.

The colour wheel pictured on this page includes **tertiary colours**. Tertiary colours are made by mixing a primary colour with the secondary colour next to it on the colour wheel. There are six tertiary colours: red-orange, yellow-orange, blue-violet, red-violet, yellow-green and blue-green.

Hue and value

Every colour is characterised by its **hue**. The name of the colour, such as red, orange or blue-violet, describes the colour's hue. A colour of any hue can also have darkness or lightness. This is the **value** of the colour.

Tints, tones and shades

Variations of colour can be created by mixing colour with black and white.

Mixing a colour with white creates a **tint**. Mixing a colour with black creates a **shade**. Mixing a colour with grey (black and white) creates a **tone**. Different quantities of black, white or grey will create different tints, tones or shades. The colour wheel pictured on the next page shows tints, tones and shades of the primary, secondary and tertiary colours.

- 1 Make your own colour wheel that includes the:
 - three primary, three secondary and six tertiary colours (label each hue)
 - tints, shades and tones of each colour.
- 2 Cut out or collect squares of different colours from photographs or magazines. Arrange and stick the squares of colour into a grid to show a sequence of hues (for example, blue, blue-green, green, green-yellow, yellow).



Twelve-part colour wheel with primary, secondary and tertiary colours

The first colour wheel was developed in the middle of the seventeenth century as a result of experiments by Sir Isaac Newton (1643–1726). Newton split light using a prism to reveal the spectrum of colours that make up the colour wheel.

A **monochromatic** colour scheme has one **hue** of colour – or **tints**, **shades** and **tones** of that colour.

Colour power

Colour is the most important element in **Colour Field painting**, a style that developed in America in the 1950s. The Colour Field painters, such as **Mark Rothko** (1903–1970), worked with broad expanses of colour, often on a large scale, to create paintings that enabled the viewer to really see and feel the effect of colour.

For Rothko, colour had great emotional and spiritual power. *Untitled (Red)* is painted with many layers of thin paint. Each layer of paint is like a thin veil that subtly changes the colour of the area it is painted over. Can you see how the layers are built up in some parts to create broad areas of intense colour that appear to hover on the surface of the painting?

- 3 What ideas or meanings does the colour used in *Untitled (Red)* suggest to you? What is it about the colour that suggests this?
- 4 What techniques do you think Rothko used to apply colour? How do you think these techniques add to the effect of the colour in the painting?

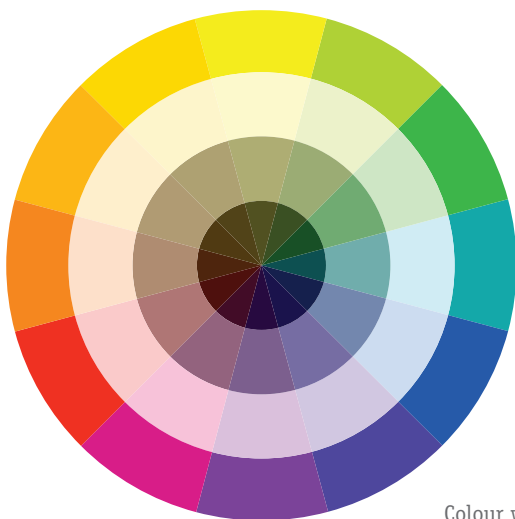
DISCUSS

Rothko had strong ideas about how his work should be displayed. He preferred his works to have a space of their own to immerse people in the viewing experience.

Suggest why he had such strong feelings about how it should be displayed. What role should artists have in determining how their work should be viewed?



Mark Rothko
American, 1903–1970
Untitled (Red), 1956
glue, oil, synthetic polymer paint and resin on canvas
209.5 × 125.3 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Purchased through The Art Foundation of Victoria with the assistance of the Helen M Schutt Trust, Governor, the Commonwealth Banking Corporation, Fellow, and The Signet Group, Fellow, 1982 (EA1–1982)
© Kate Rothko Prizel & Christopher Rothko/ARS. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



Colour wheel showing tints, tones and shades

COLOUR

3.2

SCHEMING WITH COLOUR

The combination of colours in an artwork is called a colour scheme. The relationship between colours in an artwork plays an important role in conveying meaning. The colour wheel (pp. 66–7) is a useful tool for understanding colour schemes and relationships.

Harmonious colours are sometimes described as **analogous colours**.

Warm colours look as though they are coming towards us, while **cool colours** look further away. Many artists use this effect to suggest distance and space in their paintings.

Harmonious colours

People who get on harmoniously usually have something in common – so do **harmonious colours**. Harmonious colours are side by side on the colour wheel. In a twelve-part colour wheel (p. 66), any sequence of three colours represents a colour **harmony**. For example, red-orange, red and red-violet. Because harmonious colours are alike, colour schemes that use harmonious colours are usually gentle and serene. The painting *Untitled (Red)* by American artist Mark Rothko (p. 67) has a harmonious colour scheme. Every colour in the painting is related to red.

Complementary colours

Look for the three **primary colours** on the colour wheel. Do you notice that the colour directly opposite each primary colour is made from a mixture of the other two primary colours? For example, red is opposite green, which is made from blue and yellow.

Opposite colours have nothing in common. When placed side by side they create **contrast** because they are so different. It is like putting people with opposite personalities together. Because they are so different, each makes the other stand out. Opposite colours are called **complementary colours**.

In colour schemes with complementary colours, the contrast can create a feeling of vibrancy and energy.

Captured in colour

French artist **Camille Pissarro** (1830–1903) has used complementary colours in *Peasants' Houses, Eragny*.

Pissarro painted this work in a style known as **Pointillism**, in which artists applied paint in small dots of colour. From a distance, viewers optically mix the coloured dots to see broad areas of colour, light and shadow rather than individual dots.

Pointillists understood that when a colour is placed next to its opposite colour, it appears brighter than when it is near like colours. The dots of complementary colours in Pissarro's painting include pinks, greens, purples and yellows. Together, they capture the brilliant light and atmosphere of a sunny day.

- 1 Note two examples of where you can see complementary colours together in Pissarro's painting.
- 2 Consider the type of day Pissarro has described.
 - List four words or phrases that describe the light, atmosphere and weather.
 - Explain how colour helps communicate these conditions.

Colour associations

Certain colours may stir memories, evoke an emotional response or have other associations.

The colours associated with fire – reds, oranges and yellows – can make you feel warm or hot. The colours associated with water, ice and plants – blues and greens – can make you feel cool or cold. Artists can use the 'temperature' associated with colour for effect or to communicate meaning.

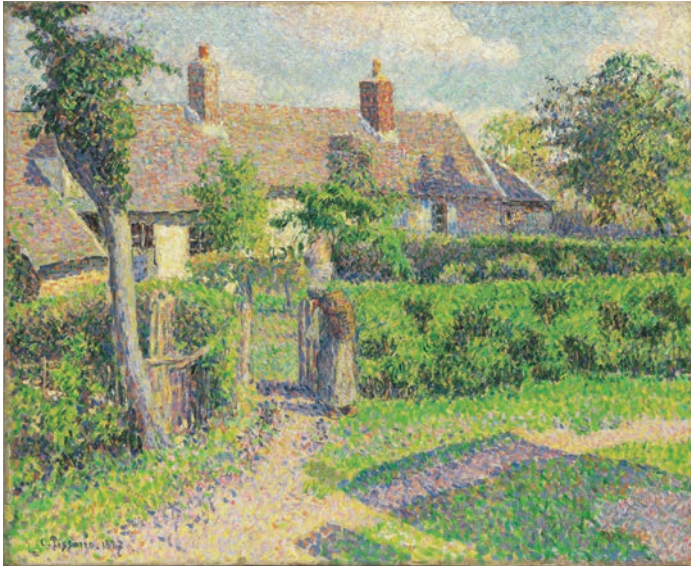
Some colours remind you of feelings or objects. For example, red is often associated with blood, anger, passion or energy.

- 3 Find two photographs or make two drawings of rooms or environments, one with warm colours and the other with cool colours. Explain what it is about the colour in each image that makes it appear 'warm' or 'cool'.



DISCUSS

Look at the four squares of red against the four different backgrounds. Which red appears brightest? Which red square appears largest? In fact, the red squares are all the same. Why do you think the background colour changes how we see the red?



Camille Pissarro
 French, 1830–1903
Peasants' Houses, Eragny, 1887
 oil on canvas
 59.0 × 71.7 cm (stretcher); 83.0 × 96.6 × 11.0 cm (frame)



(detail)

A message with colour

Colour plays a powerful role in communicating the artist's message in the poster by **Bob Clutterbuck** (b. 1959).

The poster was made when worldwide concerns about uranium mining and nuclear war were running high. The issue caused concern in the Pacific, where many Indigenous people were forced to move from their homes when foreign powers, (including China, the Soviet Union and the United

States) undertook atomic tests and military exercises.

- 4 Describe the colours and colour relationships in Clutterbuck's poster and explain how they communicate the artist's message.
- 5 Create a table with four columns. In the first column, list black, white and at least four colours. In the remaining columns, add words or phrases that describe:
 - emotions or feelings associated with the colours
 - objects, ideas or other meanings associated with the colours.

Many people other than artists work with colour. Colour therapists use colour to influence the way people behave and feel by creating suitably coloured environments in places such as hospitals, factories and schools. Colour forecasters predict colour trends – from the colours of the cars we will drive to the colours we will be wearing and using to decorate our homes.

The Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) Movement has nominated 1 March each year as NFIP Day to remind people of the harm that has been caused to the Pacific's environment and people by foreign colonial powers, especially as a result of nuclear testing.



CREATE

Close your eyes and draw on a large piece of paper:

- two horizontal lines
- three vertical lines
- two large circles, one medium circle and two small circles.

Use this as a template to make an abstract painting of different tints and tones of harmonious colours. Towards the end, add some complementary colours to create contrast and interest.

Bob Clutterbuck
 Australian, b. 1951
Fight for an Independent and Nuclear Free Pacific 1, 1982–84
 poster, screen printed on mg litho paper
 76 × 51 cm
 © Bob Clutterbuck, Red Letter Press



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a video about this issue.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Since ancient times, people have experimented with ways of creating colour for painting and decorating. Many colours have assumed special or symbolic meanings. Conventions about how and where colours should be used have also emerged.

Creating colour and meaning

The history of colour includes fascinating stories about the origins and significance of colours.

The earliest known paint **pigments** came from coloured clays and chalks so they tended to be in earthy hues. Black was created from burning materials such as wood or bone. Later, minerals were used to produce colours such as greens and blues.

The ancient Egyptians created a colour known as Egyptian blue by grinding down blue glass. In ancient Egypt, blue was associated with the colour of the sky, the heavens, water (including the River Nile), fertility and rebirth. The creator god, Amon, was often shown with a blue skin.

Experiments to create pigments resulted in many colours that faded quickly or were toxic. A colour known as ‘emerald green’ – manufactured in England in the nineteenth century and widely used by artists and in house paints – contained poisonous arsenic.

The precious gemstone lapis lazuli was used in the Middle East to create blue as early as the sixth century; however, it was not until the thirteenth century that a technique for creating a permanent, intense, rich blue from lapis lazuli was perfected. The precious blue pigment was transported by boat from the Middle East to Europe, where it became known as ultramarine, which means ‘from the sea’. It was worth its weight in gold and could only be afforded by the very wealthy.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, synthetic pigments gave artists and industry inexpensive alternatives to many natural pigments and a significantly expanded range of colours.

An image of devotion

Christians are followers of Jesus Christ, and Christianity has been practised in Europe since the first century.

In the fourteenth century, devotional images, such as the painting by Italian artist **Agnolo Gaddi** (active 1369–96), became very popular. Such paintings were used as a focus for private prayer and worship and were designed to create an emotional link in which the viewer felt an attachment to the subject of the painting.

In this image, baby Jesus, nursed by his mother, Mary, is surrounded by saints and angels. Images of the Madonna and child have a long history in the Christian tradition and reflect many **conventions**. For example, Mary is conventionally shown wearing a blue gown. The value of the blue pigment reflects Mary’s important status, and in the Christian tradition, blue is also associated with truth, the sky and heaven. Gold is also highly valued and reserved for important subjects in many cultures. In the Christian tradition, the brilliance of gold is associated with the majesty and presence of God.

When this painting was first made, it would have been displayed on an altar in a church lit only by candle or oil lamps.

1 How do you think this painting might stir emotions in a viewer? Consider how colour was used and how the work was displayed.

The colour carmine red is made from tiny cochineal insects that live on cacti in Mexico and South America. It is widely used as a colourant in many products, including cosmetics and some foods.

Mummy brown was a popular colour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and was available until the 1960s. It was made from pigments obtained by grinding down ancient Egyptian mummies.

Madonna means ‘my lady’ in Italian.

EXPLORE

Research the history of one colour.

- How was the colour first made?
- Describe how the colour was used in two cultures or historical periods.
- What meanings or ideas are associated with the colour?

Create a presentation to share your findings with the class.



Agnolo Gaddi
 Italian, active 1369–96
Madonna and Child with Saint John the Evangelist, Saint John the Baptist, Saint James of Compostela and Saint Nicholas of Bari, c. 1388–90
 tempera and gold on wood panel
 97.5 × 53.5 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Purchased through the NGV Foundation with the assistance of two anonymous donors, Neilma Gantner, Honorary Life Benefactor, Paula Fox, Governor, Lady Reid, Governor, and the proceeds of the Inaugural Fundraising Dinner at NGV International, 2003 (2003.690)

From a holy text

India is a country often associated with vibrant colour, and many of the colours have symbolic and cultural significance linked to Hindu traditions. In Hinduism, red is often associated with purity, fertility and passion; red is the colour worn for celebrations, including marriages. Red dots are applied to foreheads on important occasions. White has a spiritual significance and is also the colour of mourning worn by widows.

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest religions and is the main religion in India. Although Hindus believe in one universal god, Brahman, Hinduism includes many other gods and goddesses who represent different forms of Brahman.

One of the most popular gods is Krishna, who is associated with love and joy. Krishna is commonly depicted with blue or sometimes black skin. Blue is often used to represent Hindu gods. It has been suggested that blue represents the infinite presence of god because it is associated with the vast oceans and the sky.

This painting is from a Bhagavata Purana. The Puranas are ancient holy texts that might have been written as early as the sixth century. The Puranas include the story of the birth of Krishna, who was born to Vasudeva and Devaki. On the night of Krishna's birth, Vasudeva gave Krishna to Nanda and Yashoda (a cowherd and his wife) to save him from his evil uncle. The Puranas describe the strong love that Yashoda developed for Krishna and include many stories of Krishna's childhood among the *gopis* (wives and daughters of the cowherds).

- 2 It has been suggested that Indian art places more importance on emotional realism than on realistic appearance. How is this evident in the image of Yashoda nursing the child Krishna?
- 3 Compare the use of colour in these two religious paintings.

Rajasthan is in north-west India and is India's largest state. Three cities in Rajasthan are known for their colours: Jaipur, the pink city; Jodhpur, the blue city; and Jaisalmer, the golden or yellow city.

Krishna is from a Sanskrit term that means black, dark or dark blue.

The Hindu festival of Holi is also known as the festival of colours. It celebrates the arrival of spring in India and in many other communities around the world. During Holi celebrations, people traditionally spray family and friends with brightly coloured powders.



Mithram
 Indian
Folio from a Bhagavata Purana: Yashoda Nursing the Child Krishna, c. 1525–50
 opaque watercolour on paper
 14.0 × 22.4 cm (image)
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Felton Bequest, 1976

LINE

3.4

ABOUT LINES

A line is a mark that has more length than width. It may be straight or curved, long or short, thick or thin, broken or solid. There are endless possibilities.

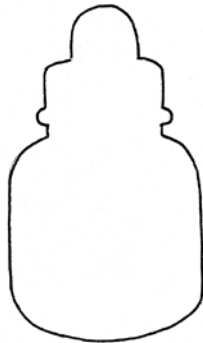
Different types of lines create different effects. Lines can take you to places or make you feel things. Before you begin to investigate lines, you need to know where to find them.

The Swiss-born artist Paul Klee (1879–1940) once said that drawing was like ‘taking a line for a walk’.⁵

Line hunt

There are lines everywhere you look – in the world around you and in artworks.

Even in artworks where it may seem that the artist is not deliberately making lines, you will usually discover some sort of line. For example, when two colours or tones are placed side by side, where they meet forms a line. You see this type of line in the Henri Matisse cut-out (p. 78). If the colours or tones in an artwork are similar, the line may be unclear or hard to see.



Outlines define boundaries and edges.



Contour lines are more descriptive; they define form, contours and detail.

Described in line

Can you see how many different ways Australian artist **John Brack** (1920–1999) (pp. 94–5) has used line in his drawing *The Children’s Heads?* Strong **outlines** describe the shapes of the children’s heads and shoulders.

Contour lines describe the details of their faces, hair and clothes. To create shadow behind the children and in the children’s faces, the artist has built up areas of fine lines, known as **hatching** and **cross-hatching**. Hatching is often used to create shadows and the effect of three-dimensional form. Without the hatching and cross-hatching, the drawing would look flat.

- 1 Find an example of an artwork where lines are created when different colours or tones meet.
 - Make a copy of the artwork using line instead of colour and tone to show the main outline and contour lines.
 - Are the lines clear or hard to see in the original artwork? Explain why.

Many artists have made work inspired by their children. *The Children’s Heads* is one of many drawings and prints that Brack made of his young daughters. These works vividly capture the personalities of his children.



John Brack
Australian, 1920–1999
The Children’s Heads, 1957
pencil and wash
39.5 × 79.9 cm
Private collection
© Helen Brack

- 2 Choose a simple object with an interesting shape. Using different types of line, make three small drawings of the object, including:
 - an outline drawing using pen or pencil
 - a contour drawing using pen or pencil
 - a drawing or collage where an outline is created where two colours or tones meet.
- 3 Find four different sorts of lines (such as heavy, fine or parallel) in *The Children's Heads*. Explain in words or on an annotated image:
 - where each type of line is used
 - the purpose of each type of line (what it describes or what effect it creates).
- 4 Think about what Brack's drawing communicates to you about the personality of each child. Give each child a name and briefly describe each child's personality, explaining what it is about the drawing that suggests the personality traits.

Falling in line

Line is an important element in *Falling* by Iranian-born Australian artist **Hossein Valamanesh** (b. 1949) but there are no drawn or painted lines. The lines in this work are formed by the edges of the sculpture, which is made from wood and bamboo stems. The bamboo stems are gently curved and tapered to create lines that flow through space and suggest a gentle falling movement.

- 5 What ideas or other meanings does *Falling* suggest to you? Why? In your answer consider:
 - the role of line and shape
 - the role of the materials used
 - any personal associations you have with the art elements or materials.

EXPLORE

Find an artwork that interests you in which line is an important element.

- Describe the types of lines that are used in the artwork and how they have been used. Are they outlines, contour lines or lines that suggest feeling or depth?
- What ideas or other meanings are suggested by the lines in the work?
- What interests you about the work?



Another work in the series featuring falling figures by Valamanesh, *Falling Breeze* (1991), uses an outline of the body of his son, Nassiem, whose name means breeze in Farsi.

Hossein Valamanesh
 Australian, b. 1949
Falling, 1990
 wood, bamboo, sand, steel,
 black granite
 390 × 55 × 50 cm
 National Gallery of Australia,
 Canberra
 Purchased 2002
 © Hossein Valamanesh.
 Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

3.5

FEELING AND MOVING WITH LINE

Lines create movement. They direct attention around or through an artwork by tracing or suggesting a path for our eyes to follow. Lines can also communicate feeling. They can make you react and feel emotion just as colour can.

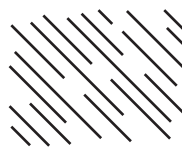
The characteristics of lines influence perception. A heavy, thick line will have a dramatic effect. A delicate, fine line might only suggest something, rather than state it boldly. Artists sometimes repeat lines in an artwork for added effect.



Horizontal lines are associated with lying down. They look still, peaceful and calm. They can create movement from side to side.



Vertical lines are associated with standing up. They look active, upright, alert, strong and formal. They can create movement up and down.



Diagonal lines are associated with movement. They are full of energy and action.

Buzzing with energy

The work of Australian artist **Lesley Dumbrell** (b. 1941) is often inspired by things that the artist has seen or experienced in nature, although she does not represent what she sees or experiences in a realistic way. She uses just the visual power of art elements, such as line and colour, to express her ideas about a subject.

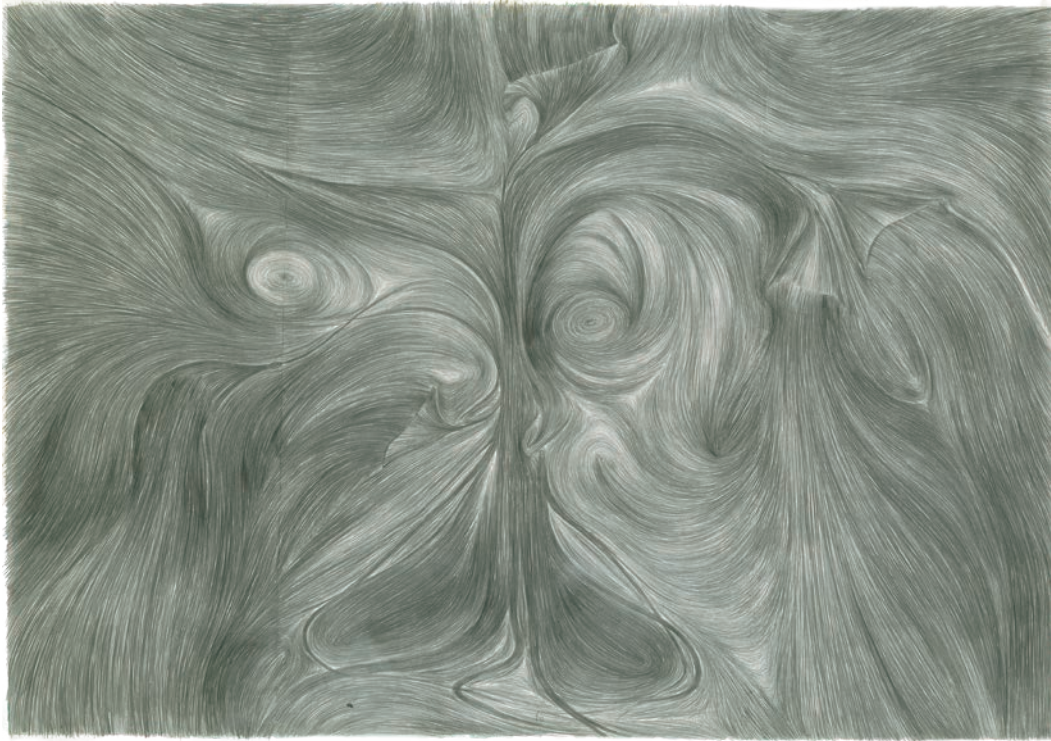
November suggests buzzing energy. At first glance, it may appear that the artist has achieved this effect very simply; however, once you spend time exploring the painting, you will discover interesting things about line and colour. Did you notice that some lines seem more powerful because they are painted with two colours?

It is also interesting to focus on a particular colour or type of line in the painting. You then realise how variations of the same line are repeated over the whole surface of the painting.

- 1 What aspect of the natural world might have inspired *November*? Why?
- 2 What would you call the painting if you were the artist? Why?
- 3 How do the colours in *November* add to the meanings associated with the lines?
- 4 Dumbrell was influenced by the work of Bridget Riley. Compare *Streak 2* (p. 32) with *November*. Consider the similarities and differences in:
 - colours and lines
 - painting technique
 - ideas and meanings.



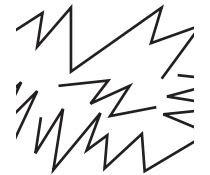
Lesley Dumbrell
Australian, b. 1941
November, 1982
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
183.0 × 211.5 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased 1983 (AC4-1983)
© Lesley Dumbrell



Dale Frank
 Australian, b. 1959
The Appealing Eyes of the Blacksmith Facing the Tyrant, 1981
 pencil
 185.0 × 267.7 (image);
 189.4 × 272.0 cm (sheet)
 Michell Endowment, 1982
 (DC34–1982)
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 © Dale Frank. Courtesy of
 the artist and Roslyn Oxley9
 Gallery, Sydney



Lines can be free form; they can go in a number of different directions. This gives them a feeling of movement and energy. The directions they follow will also create associations and feelings.



Zigzag lines can be associated with lightning or anger.



Curved lines may suggest water and create a feeling of gentle movement. Spirals may create a stronger, swirling movement.

Caught in a whirlpool

What is your first reaction to the drawing by Australian artist **Dale Frank** (b. 1959)? Your reaction would be stronger if you were able to view the drawing in real life because it is very large. The repeated swirling lines create giddy patterns that sweep across the surface of the work and at various points seem to almost suck viewers into a whirlpool or vortex.

Frank made this drawing by pinning a large piece of paper to the wall. He started drawing outward from a mark near the centre of the paper, following his instincts rather than any set plan.

This drawing is one of a series of self-portraits. It is possible to see how some of the linear patterns suggest facial features, but Frank was not interested in making a self-portrait that described his physical appearance. His drawing is a self-portrait because of what it tells us about the artist's thoughts and actions.

- 5 Look at the lines in the two artworks pictured here. For each artwork:
- List six words or phrases that can be used to describe the lines.
 - Describe the ideas or meanings the lines suggest to you.

- 6 Frank gave mysterious titles to each of the drawings in his self-portrait series.
- What does the title of his work add to your understanding of the drawing?
 - Why do you think he gave his drawings such titles?
- 7 What challenges might Frank have faced making this drawing? Consider the size of the work and how it was made.
- 8 Imagine that you have won a competition and you can choose as your prize either the painting by Dumbrell or the drawing by Frank. Which will it be? Why?



CREATE

American artist Alexander Calder (1898–1976) made line drawings using wire. To find an example of Calder's wire drawings, try an Internet image search for 'Alexander Calder wire sculpture'.

To make your own wire drawing, set the end of a long piece of flexible wire in a container full of plaster. Use the wire to make a three-dimensional line drawing of a person involved in some sort of physical activity, such as running or dancing.

Before you begin, observe a person in action and make some quick pen or pencil drawings. These will help you determine the outline you need to 'draw' with the wire to effectively suggest movement.

3.6

POWER LINES

Lines play an important role in art in creating impact and communicating ideas and meanings.

In the work of John Mawurndjul and Emily Kam Ngwarray, you see how two Indigenous Australian artists have used line to create images that are powerful expressions of culture.

A later work by Mawurndjul is on p. 149.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a short film that includes footage of Ngwarray painting.

Ancestral power

Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent, is an important and revered ancestor spirit for the Kuniñjku people of western Arnhem Land (p. 22). The Kuniñjku believe that Ngalyod created the sacred sites (*djang*) in Kuniñjku clan land and that he continues to guard them. According to Kuniñjku mythology, some of the sacred sites were created when Ngalyod swallowed and transformed other beings during the ancestral period. Ngalyod

lives in deep waterholes and brings the life-giving rains of the wet season.

This is one of many paintings of Ngalyod by **John Mawurndjul** (b. 1952). Mawurndjul is a member of the Kurulk clan of the Kuniñjku people. Dilebang is an important Rainbow Serpent site for the Kurulk clan.

Line is an important element in Mawurndjul's work. Can you see how he uses lines to depict the power of Ngalyod? The strong, twisting form of Ngalyod's body is outlined against a plain background and swells to almost the edges of the bark painting. Ngalyod's skin is painted with a *rarrk* pattern that is created from finely painted cross-hatched lines. The intricate pattern of lines creates a brilliant shimmer that reflects Ngalyod's spiritual significance and power. The *rarrk* also encodes layers of meaning about sacred sites that are not public knowledge.

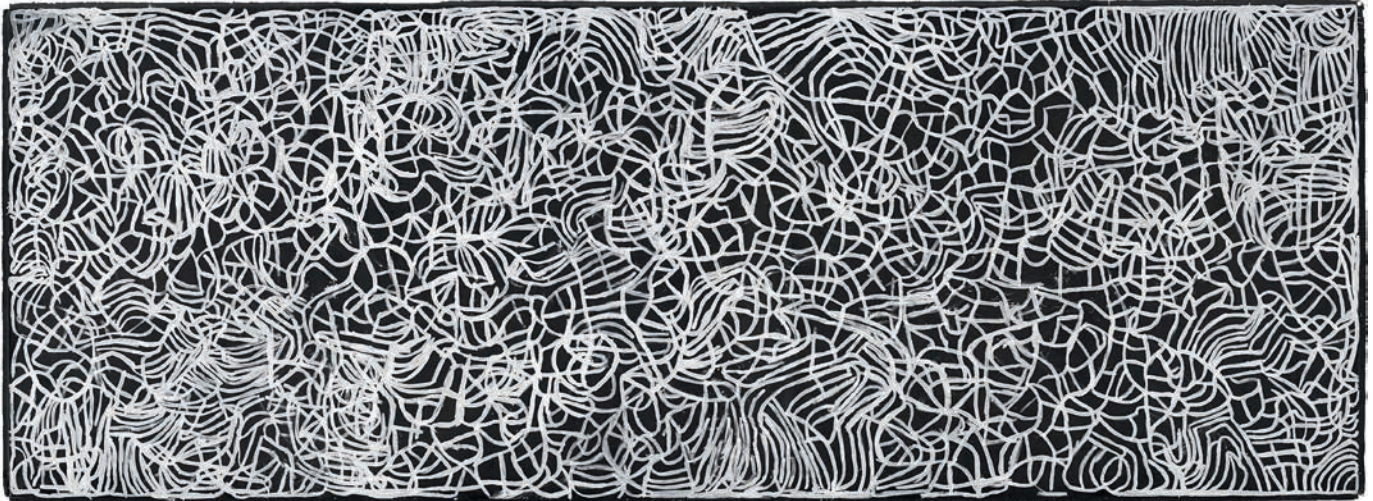
- 1 Consider the different lines that Mawurndjul has used in *Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent at Dilebang*. List three adjectives that describe the lines used to:
 - outline of body of Ngalyod
 - create the *rarrk*.
- 2 Do you agree that the lines used in *Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent at Dilebang* reflect the significance and power of Ngalyod? Why?

Power of country

In *Anwerlarr Anganenty (Big Yam Dreaming)*, flowing lines meander and weave under and over each other to create an intricate linear



John Mawurndjul
Australian (Kuniñjku, eastern Kunwinjku people),
b. 1952
Ngalyod, the Rainbow Serpent at Dilebang, c. 1979
earth pigments on stringy-bark (*Eucalyptus* sp.)
127.2 × 88.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the Premier's Department, 1980 (0.1–1980)
© John Mawurndjul. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016



Emily Kam Kngwarray
 Australian (Anmatyerre), c. 1910–1996
Anwerlarr Anganenty (Big Yam Dreaming), 1995
 synthetic polymer paint on canvas
 291.1 × 801.8 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by Donald and Janet Holt and family, Governors, 1995 (1995.709)
 © Emily Kam Kngwarray. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

web across the vast 8-metre canvas. Can you see how the lines converge in some areas to create intense patterns but spread out in other areas to create a more open pattern? The contrast between the white lines and the black background is dramatic and conveys a pulsing energy.

In this painting, **Emily Kam Kngwarray** (c. 1910–1996) communicates the life and abundance of her country. Kngwarray was born around 1910 at Alhalkere, the country of her father and grandfather. Throughout her life, Kngwarray maintained strong connections with her country and the Dreaming (*Altyerr*), which is a source of important knowledge about the land and cultural lore. She was an important leader of women’s ceremonies (*avelye*) in her community.

The Dreaming story of the pencil yam (*anwerlarr*) was particularly significant for Kngwarray. Her middle name, Kam, means the seeds and flowers of the pencil yam plant. The pencil yam is a creeper with fibrous roots that are an important desert food. As the roots ripen, the earth above cracks. The pencil yam is celebrated in women’s ceremonies through songs and dances to ensure that it continues to proliferate. Many of Kngwarray’s paintings also celebrate the pencil yam.

- 3 List adjectives to describe the lines in *Anwerlarr Anganenty (Big Yam Dreaming)*.
- 4 Suggest how *Anwerlarr Anganenty (Big Yam Dreaming)* can be seen as a celebration of pencil yams.

EXPLORE

Identify another work by Kngwarray or Mawurndjul in which line is an important element.

Briefly describe the way line is used in the painting and explain how this contributes to the ideas, feelings or other meanings communicated by the work.

CREATE

Identify an animal, plant or natural landscape feature that is of interest or significance to you. Research its attributes and physical characteristics.

Using line as the main element, create a work in a medium of your choice. Through its use of lines, your work should communicate something about the characteristics of your chosen animal, plant or landscape feature.

Traditionally, in Kuninjku culture, younger artists have learnt to paint from older artists. Mawurndjul was taught by his elder brother Jimmy Njiminjuma (1947–2004) and his uncle Peter Marralwanga (1917–1987). In turn, Mawurndjul has become an important teacher and mentor for other artists.

He has been instrumental in supporting Kuninjku women to become artists. He taught his wife, Kay Lindjuwanga (b. 1957), and his eldest daughter, Anna Wurrkidj (b. 1975), to paint in the 1990s, and they have both become accomplished artists.

Although Kngwarray made sand and body paintings as part of her traditional culture throughout her life, she did not start painting with acrylics on canvas until 1988. In the eight years until her death in 1996, it is estimated that she made more than 3000 paintings.

Alhalkere became part of a pastoral lease known as Utopia in the 1920s. The pastoralists named the area Utopia because when they first arrived they were able to catch rabbits by hand, and they thought they had discovered an abundant source of food. Located approximately 250 kilometres north-east of Alice Springs, Utopia was returned to the traditional owners in 1983, following a successful land-rights claim.

SHAPE

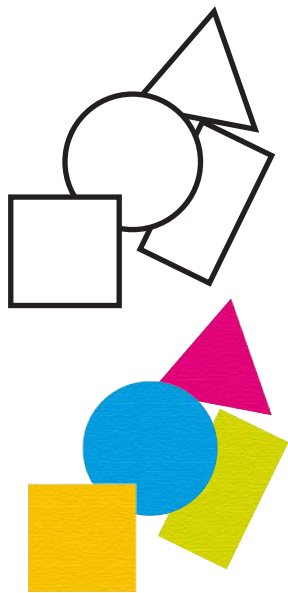
3.7

FEELING IN SHAPE

An endless variety of shapes is all around us – from the regular, geometric shapes of the man-made environment to the irregular, **organic** shapes of nature.

Shapes are important in art because different types of shapes create different effects. Like colour and line, shapes can suggest or communicate ideas and meanings.

The three basic shapes are rectangles, circles and triangles. Because shapes are made from lines, or edges that are seen as lines, the reactions you have to shapes are similar to those you have to the lines that created them.



Shapes are flat and two-dimensional. They can be made from an outline or they can be made when a flat area of colour or tone is separated from the background by an edge.

Later in life, Matisse made huge paper collages. Even when he was weakened by illness, he would cut out the shapes for collages, and assistants would arrange them with his supervision.

Any object can be presented two-dimensionally as a flat shape. The easiest way to see and make a shape is to look at an object's shadow. A shadow can be produced easily by standing an object between a light and a flat surface, such as a wall. By tracing the outline of the shadow onto some paper, you will make a **silhouette** of the object.

Positive and negative

Whenever a shape is drawn, painted or cut, another shape is made around it. The shapes that artists make are called **positive shapes**. The shapes that are made around positive shapes are called **negative shapes**. Although people tend to notice positive shapes more than negative shapes, both are important in an artwork.



Henri Matisse
French, 1869–1954
Icare (Icarus), 1947
from the portfolio *Jazz*
colour stencil, printed from multiple papercut stencils,
lithograph, printed in black ink, from one stone
42.2 × 32.8 cm (comp and sheet)
Image courtesy of National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1980
© Succession H Matisse. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Shaping Jazz

In *Icare* by French artist **Henri Matisse** (1869–1954), the black and yellow shapes are positive shapes. The blue in Matisse's print is the negative shape.

Matisse was fascinated by the effects that could be created by using colour, shape and line. He was often inspired by what he saw in the world around him, but he was not interested in describing the world in a realistic way. He would simplify and change the appearance of an object to create an exciting arrangement of colours and shapes that had a life of its own.

In 1943, Matisse began work on a book called *Jazz*. The book, which explored many of his ideas about art and life, included 20 **silk-screen prints**. *Icare* uses bold, bright colours and shapes to show the mythical bird-man Icare (Icarus) falling through space.

The prints in *Jazz* were based on a series of small paper **collages**. Matisse loved the effects that he could create using paper collage and the freedom of the technique. For Matisse, collage was like drawing with scissors.

Although the compositions that Matisse created often appear simple and spontaneous, he thought very carefully about each shape's colour and placement. Try to imagine *Icare* without the red dot or yellow stars – just a black shape by itself in the middle of a large area of blue. The blue would tend to take over. Every shape is vital to the energy and life in the composition.

- 1 Suggest how Matisse has ensured that the black positive shape is not dominated by the blue negative shape in the composition of *Icare*.

- Look at the shapes in *Icare*.
 - List at least two describing words or phrases for three different shapes.
 - What ideas or other meanings do the shapes suggest to you? Why?
 - How does colour add to the ideas or meanings suggested by the shapes?



CREATE

For this task, you will need three pieces of paper or card: one light coloured and two dark coloured.

Trace the silhouette of an interesting shape, such as that of a plant, onto the piece of light-coloured paper. Very carefully, cut out the shape (the positive shape) without damaging the surrounding paper (the negative shape).

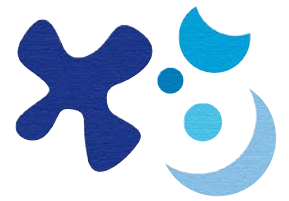
Stick the positive shape on one piece of dark paper. Create a reverse of this image by sticking the negative shape on another piece of dark paper.

Shaping an investigation

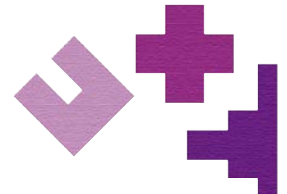
Homage to the Square: SP-J is one of a series of artworks that **Josef Albers** (1888–1976) started in 1950 and worked on until his death. The series included more than one hundred paintings, prints and tapestries. Each artwork features the same format of three or four squares nested inside each other. Each of the inner squares is positioned an equal distance from the vertical outside edges, but it sits low horizontally.

Albers used his basic square format as a starting point to systematically investigate how people perceive colour. By using different colour combinations in the squares, he showed how the relationship between colours influences our perception of colour and space. For example, dark colours against a light background appear to advance towards us. Can you see evidence of this in *Homage to the Square: SP-J*?

- Suggest why Albers chose to use a square rather than another shape for his colour investigations.
- Compare *Icare* with *Homage to the Square: SP-J*. What does the use of shape in each artwork add to the ideas communicated?



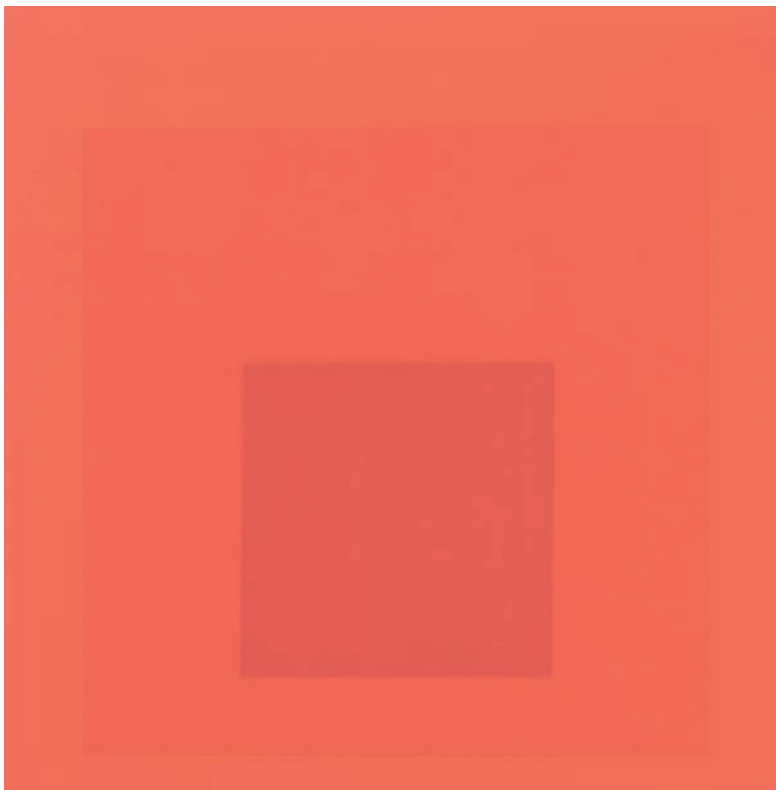
Rounded shapes have curving, sinuous lines and edges. This gives them a feeling of growth and flowing movement. They remind us of things in the natural world so they are sometimes called organic.



Blocky shapes grow from squares and rectangles. They look strong, regular and permanent. They usually make us feel calm because they are solid and still. We do not often see these shapes in the natural world, but they are quite common in the constructed world. Such shapes are sometimes described as geometric or inorganic.



Angular shapes grow from triangles. They can look sharp, energetic and even explosive. They can make us feel angry, excited or tense.



Josef Albers
 German-American, 1888–1976
Homage to the Square: SP-J, 1971
 colour screenprint
 32.2 × 32.1 cm (image); 83.0 × 62.0 cm (sheet)
 edition 53/150
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Presented through The Art Foundation of Victoria by
 Dr David Rosenthal, Governor, 1995 (1995.551)
 © The Josef and Anni Albers Foundation/VG Bild-Kunst.
 Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

SHAPE

3.8

SHAPING MEANING

Shapes can communicate meaning – in everyday life and in art.

In ancient Egypt, squares represented the idea of truth and order. Shapes can also represent cultural or national identity, as seen on many flags. The Star of David is an important symbol in the Jewish faith. The crescent shape has a long association with Islam.

Symbolic shapes can also have a personal meaning.



Common symbols



Clouds, boomerangs, windbreaks



Kangaroo



Spear thrower (woomera)



Person sitting, windbreak



Two men sitting



Campsite, stone, well, rockhole, breast, fire, hill, digging hole, waterhole or fruit

Central Australian Indigenous symbols

Symbols of culture

- 1 What ideas do you associate with the symbols pictured in the margin? Do your classmates have similar or different interpretations to your own? Why?
- 2 Draw three other familiar symbolic shapes. Note the meaning of each and where you would expect to find them.
- 3 Draw two symbolic shapes that have cultural significance. Annotate them to explain their significance.

Symbolic shapes are an important part of the visual language used by many artists. The Indigenous people of central Australia have a long tradition of using symbolic shapes to communicate meaning. Traditionally, such symbols were used in ground and rock painting, and in body art. Since the late 1970s, artists have incorporated the symbolic shapes of their culture in paintings on canvas.

As the art of this area has become more widely known, non-Indigenous audiences have also become familiar with some of the shapes' symbolic meanings; however, Indigenous symbols can have different meanings in different contexts. Artworks can have encoded meanings understood only by those who truly know the culture.

It is also important to understand that different Indigenous communities across Australia use different symbols.

Shaping a message

Can you recognise any of the symbolic shapes in the painting by **Malya Teamay** (b. 1957)?

Like traditional ground paintings, paintings such as *Broken Law* depict country and tell stories from a **bird's-eye view** or aerial view. It is sometimes useful to think of them as a map of place and time.



Malya Teamay
Australian (Pitjantjatjara), b. 1957
Broken Law, 1989
synthetic polymer paint on metal sheet
100.0 × 90.5 cm

Purchased 1990 with funds from ARCO Coal Australia Inc. through the Queensland Art Gallery Foundation
Queensland Art Gallery
© Malya Teamay. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Teamay's painting is divided into three parts by strong, black lines with bead-like, rounded shapes. The lines represent traditional Aboriginal law. The lines and symbolic shapes in the painting tell of the effect of European settlement on traditional Indigenous culture.

One part of the painting shows Indigenous culture before the arrival of Europeans. Symbolic shapes show people gathered around camp fires and protected by windbreaks. In another part, shapes reveal the arrival of the Europeans and the disruption of traditional Indigenous culture. In the third part, the shapes suggest some hope for the future as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people meet.

- 4 Create an annotated sketch of *Broken Law* and identify the areas that show:
- Indigenous culture before the arrival of Europeans
 - the effect of Europeans on traditional Indigenous culture
 - hope for the future.
- Indicate how these ideas are communicated using symbolism, including symbolic shapes.

Personal perspectives

No Sleep till Dreamtime is a visually dazzling large-scale **installation** by **Reko Rennie** (b. 1974). It is made up of 44 separate panels that feature graphic symbolic shapes in brilliant neon and metallic colours. The work reflects the influence of graffiti and hip-hop subcultures that Rennie first discovered as a teenager growing up in Footscray in the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Do you notice three repeated symbolic shapes in a hand-drawn graffiti style: the diamond, the crown and the Aboriginal flag? The diamond reflects Rennie's connection to the Kamilaroi people of northern New South Wales. In Kamilaroi culture, designs of repeated diamonds are important markers of cultural significance and identity. Rennie has described the diamond as something like a family crest. The crown is a reminder that the Aboriginal people are the original sovereigns

of Australia. The flag is a sign of respect to all Aboriginal people.

These three symbols are the core of a personal visual language that Rennie has developed to express his identity and to challenge stereotypical representations of Indigenous culture and identity. The same symbols recur in other artworks by Rennie, including prints, neon-light works, sculptures and large public artworks.

- 5 Explain how Rennie's representation of the diamond, the crown and the Aboriginal flag:
- express his identity
 - challenge stereotypical representations of Indigenous culture and identity.



CREATE

Design a personal crest. Your crest should incorporate at least two shapes that have personal or cultural significance to you.

Think about how you will use art elements (such as colour and shape) and materials to give your crest a contemporary edge.

Make a class display of the crests. What can you learn about others from their crests?



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn more about Anangu rock art.

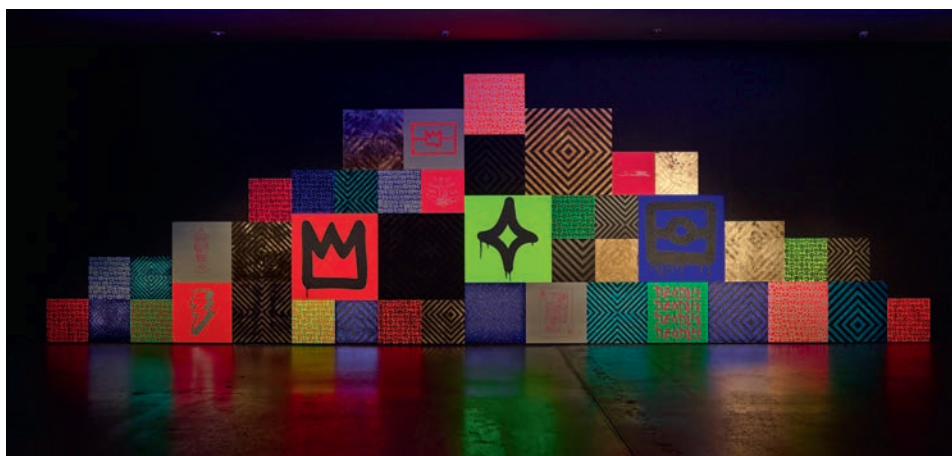


Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to Rennie's website and to interviews with the artist.

In addition to representing the sovereignty of the Indigenous people, the crown symbol used by Rennie acknowledges New York street artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988) who frequently incorporated a crown shape in his work.

The title *No Sleep till Dreamtime* refers to 'No Sleep till Brooklyn', a song by the Beastie Boys, an American hip-hop group.

Photo: AGNSW 173.2014.a-r



(detail)

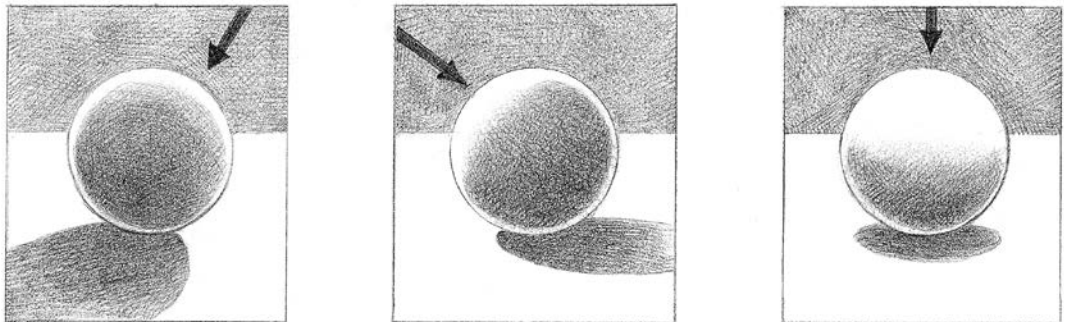
Reko Rennie
 Australian (Kamilaroi), b. 1974
No Sleep till Dreamtime, 2014
 birch plywood, metallic textile foil, synthetic polymer paint, diamond dust, gold leaf
 310 × 1030 cm (dimensions overall)
 Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Art Gallery Society of New South Wales Contemporary Group 2014
 © Reko Rennie. Courtesy of the artist and Blackartprojects

THE ART OF LIGHT AND DARK

Light creates tone. Where there is little light, you see dark shadows or tones. Where there is a lot of light, you see light, bright tones.

Tones vary from dark, velvety blacks through greys to bright, light whites. Every colour that you see has a tone. You see the tones of colours when you look at them in black-and-white photographs.

Photographic artists work directly with light. Photographs not only record light but also are made using techniques and processes that use light. Photographic artists control and manipulate light to create the tonal effects in their work.



The direction from which light comes affects the light and shade on an object and the shadow it casts.

X-ray vision

Untitled Christening Robe by Australian artist **Anne Ferran** (b. 1949) is a **photogram**.

Making photograms is one of the oldest and simplest photographic processes. No camera is involved. Instead, items are placed on light-sensitive photographic paper in darkroom conditions. When the paper is exposed to light, the uncovered areas of the paper react to the light. An image is produced when the paper is put into developing fluid. The areas that were fully exposed to light will emerge as dark shadows or **tones**. The areas of the paper that were fully protected from light will emerge as bright white. Anywhere light has been able to partially penetrate through to the paper, in-between tones will be produced. The darkness or lightness of tones in a photogram will relate directly to how much light reached the paper during exposure.

Photograms have become an important part of Ferran's work in recent years. *Untitled Christening Robe* is one of a number of photograms of nineteenth-century women's and children's clothing that Ferran produced while she was **artist-in-residence** at Rouse Hill House & Farm, a Historic Houses Trust of NSW property. Ferran was interested in

exploring the hidden or unknown aspects of the history of the house, which had been home to six generations of the one family.

Ferran was inspired by the idea of X-ray images and became increasingly interested in what could be achieved by making photograms of clothes.

The process produces a hovering, ghost-like image of empty clothes that makes us very aware of the bodies that once wore them. The X-ray quality of the images also makes the structure and history of the clothes completely transparent. Details such as seams, folds, lace trims and even mends often assume unexpected importance. Such details are reminders of not only who wore them but also who made and cared for the clothes. Other ideas about how history is recorded and constructed and about the fragility of life could also be associated with these images.

- 1 Describe what you see in *Untitled Christening Robe*. What ideas or meanings does the image suggest to you? Why?
- 2 Would a traditional black-and-white photograph of the same dress positioned in the same way suggest the same or different meanings? Explain.



CREATE

Place objects on a scanner bed and scan them into a computer's image manipulation program.

Use tools such as image adjustment, contrast, brightness and colour saturation to create a new image. To create an X-ray effect, try converting the black and white image using the inversion tool.

Use a data projector to project the class's images onto a wall at your school.



CREATE

Make your own photogram. Aim to make it as interesting as possible by carefully selecting and arranging objects before you go into the darkroom. Once in the darkroom, try to add to the tonal effects by using several short exposures and by adding, moving or removing objects in between exposures.



EXPLORE

Research the resources and techniques involved in making a photogram. Make a flow chart that will clearly explain the requirements and the process to others.



DISCUSS

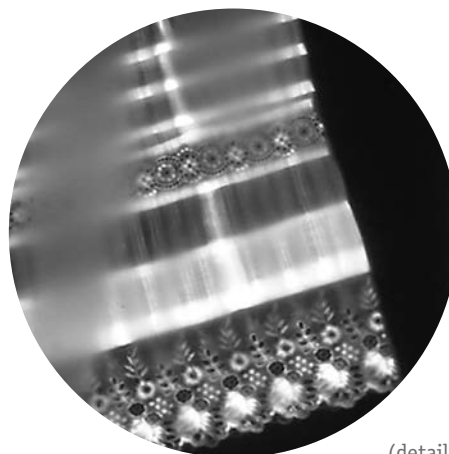
Why might organisations such as the Historic Houses Trust of NSW employ artists? How might art or artists add to visitors' understanding of history and historical places? In your discussion, refer to the work of Ferran.

What other organisations do you think would benefit from an artist-in-residence? Why? What does this add to your understanding of the role of artists in contemporary society?



Anne Ferran
Australian, b. 1949
Untitled Christening Robe, 2001
from *Flock*
silver gelatin photogram
127 × 90 cm, unique print
Courtesy Still Gallery, Sydney
© Anne Ferran. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

Ferran worked in an old schoolroom, temporarily converted into a darkroom, during her residency at Rouse Hill House & Farm. To make each photogram, Ferran would carefully arrange an item of clothing on a large sheet of light-sensitive paper laid out on the floor. The paper was then briefly exposed (5–15 seconds) to weak light. Ferran would then roll the paper up, seal it in a light-proof tube and send it out to be commercially processed.



(detail)

3.10

MAKING TONES

Colours have many tones, which can be made in many ways, depending on the materials used.

In painting, tones can be made by adding black or white to a colour (p. 66).

In drawing and printmaking, the most common technique for creating tone is hatching and cross-hatching, where artists build up areas of line to create tone.

Sculptors use real light and shadow to create tone in their work. You can see this in *Killing Time* by Ricky Swallow (p. 51).



Gradual transition of tones



Contrasting tones

The shell is an etching, so the image is the reverse of what Rembrandt drew on the etching plate. Rembrandt had to sign and date the work in reverse for it to be printed the right way around; however, he did not reverse the direction of the spiral on the top of the shell, which is anticlockwise. In nature, this spiral pattern is always clockwise.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to see reproductions of both the first- and second-state prints of *The Shell* (*Conus marmoreus*).

Tone and form

Artists can use **tone** to make flat, two-dimensional shapes appear solid and three-dimensional. Sometimes artists use a range of tones that gradually change from dark to light. A gradual transition of tones usually suggests solid, rounded, three-dimensional forms. In some artworks, however, dark and light tones are used side by side without other tones between them. Such a contrast of tones also suggests three-dimensional form, although the effect is flatter.

Observing light and shade

Dutch artist **Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn** (1606–1669) based his many paintings, prints and drawings on a careful observation of his subjects.

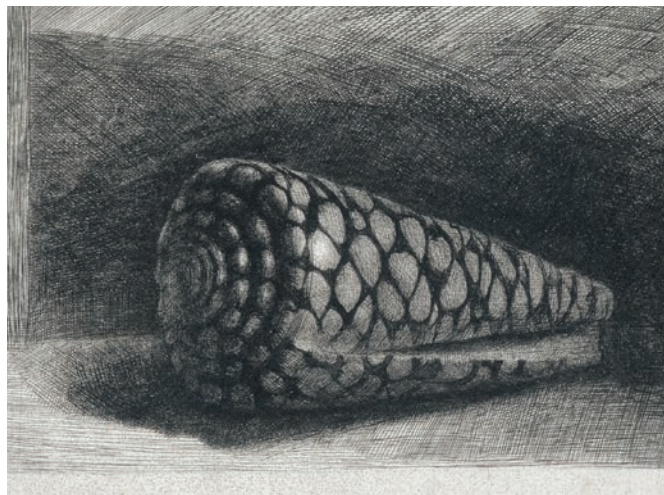
The Shell (*Conus marmoreus*) is Rembrandt's only print of a **still-life** subject. In this tiny print, he has focused on the effect of light on the shell. A range of **tones**, from crisp whites to dark, intense blacks, have been used to describe the effects of light and shadow.

The tones reveal the rounded, conical form of the shell, including its spiral end. The dark tones around the shell also indicate that the shell is sitting on a shelf.

The print is an **etching**, a printing technique that involves working with line, so the tones in this work have all been created using **hatched** and **cross-hatched** lines.

There are two states of this print. Rembrandt made one set of prints from his etching plate (first-state prints) before reworking the plate and printing another set of prints (second-state prints). The version pictured here is one of the second-state prints. The dark shadows surrounding the shell were added during the reworking process.

- 1 Which direction is the light coming from in *The Shell* (*Conus marmoreus*)? How can you tell?
- 2 Suggest why Rembrandt might have added the darker tones around the shell in the second version of the print. What effect do they create? You may find it helpful to look at an earlier version of the print to compare.



Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn
Dutch, 1606–1669
The Shell (*Conus marmoreus*), 1650
etching, drypoint and burin
9.6 × 13.3 cm (plate and sheet)
Bartsch 159; Hind 248 ii/iii
2nd of 3 states
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1973 (P5–1973)



Meaning and focus

Artists can use tone to express ideas and other meanings. Dark tones are associated with night and can feel sombre, sad, depressing, mysterious or evil. Light tones are associated with brightness and light, and can feel delicate, radiant or airy.

Artists can also use tone to focus attention on particular parts of an artwork. Often this is done by using a light tone against a dark tone, which creates a contrast that works in the same way as a spotlight on a stage.

A dramatic story

Italian artist **Mattia Preti** (1613–1699) uses tone dramatically in his painting. He uses bright, light tones to attract attention to the most important parts of the painting, almost like a spotlight. He also uses tone to create atmosphere and feeling.

The subject of Preti's painting is taken from ancient history, when the powerful Roman Empire extended into many parts of the world. In 204 BCE, the Romans conquered Cirta (Constantine, Algeria) in northern Africa. General Massinissa fell in love with and married Sophonisba, the queen of Cirta. The Romans, however, did not approve of their marriage and insisted that she be imprisoned as an enemy of Rome. What

was the general to do? He knew that she would rather die than be taken prisoner by the Romans, so he sent her a gift ...

- 3 Describe how tone is used in the painting to:
 - focus attention on details that provide clues about the story
 - add mood and atmosphere
 - suggest three-dimensional form.
- 4 Describe the techniques used by Rembrandt and Preti to create tone.
- 5 Make some tonal grids by drawing two rows of six small squares. Use a soft lead pencil and blending and smudging techniques to draw tones in the first row. Use a fine pen to draw lines or dots that create tones in the second row. The darkest tone should be at one end of each row and the lightest at the other. The tones in between should show a gradual transition from light to dark.

Mattia Preti
Italian, 1613–1699
Sophonisba Receiving the Poison, c. 1675
oil on canvas
143.8 × 259.0 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1968
(1818–5)



CREATE

Find a white, three-dimensional object with an interesting, irregular shape. Place the object against a white background and shine a light on it so you can see obvious shadows. (You could paint an object white for the purpose of this exercise. It could be something as simple as an egg container.)

Make a drawing or painting using tone to make your object look solid and three-dimensional.

3.11

CREATING ANOTHER DIMENSION

Three-dimensional shapes are called forms. Forms take up space: they have length, width and height. Form can be described in many ways; a pencil has a cylindrical form, while a tennis ball has a spherical form.

'Real' form is found in **three-dimensional art**. In **two-dimensional art**, such as painting and drawing, the illusion of form is often found.

Feeling in form

Line, shape and form are closely related. The reaction we have to a particular form is related to the reactions you have to the shapes and lines that you see in the form. Notice how different the shapes and lines in *Covert 7 City* are from those in *Garden*. The different forms in each artwork give each artwork its distinctive quality and play an important role in communicating the artists' intended messages.

Building a city

Covert 7 City by **Tim Jones** (b. 1962) contains many of the blocky, rectangular forms that are common in built environments, especially cities; however, in *Covert 7 City* many of the forms, especially those that appear to be rising from the solid base of the sculpture, appear exceptionally tall and elongated.

Not long before making the sculpture, Jones visited old cities in Tuscany, Italy, including a thirteenth-century city of towers. He was fascinated by this and other cities, such as Manhattan and London, and even fictional cities. Batman's imaginary Gotham City was another source of inspiration for this work.

The sculpture is also about Melbourne. Jones was born in Wales but spent some time working in Melbourne. In 1989, he returned to Melbourne after several years' absence and was amazed at the sight of so many cranes and towers on the skyline. He was happy to be back in the city, where he eventually settled, and to see this growth and construction.

DISCUSS

Jones has also made a wood-engraving print of *Covert 7 City*. Why might artists choose to represent the same object in different media?



An illusion of form can be created using contour lines or tone.



Tim Jones
Welsh, b. 1962
Covert 7 City, 1989–90
wood, ink, paint, bitumen, steel, lead, cord, plaster, pigment
336 × 211 × 55 cm
Purchased 1989
University of Melbourne Art Collection

1 Describe how Jones has created three-dimensional form in *Covert 7 City*.

It is a strange world

The forms in *Garden* by Australian artist **Amanda Marburg** (b. 1976) are not what they seem. *Garden* may look like a three-dimensional model, but it is actually a painting of a photograph of a three-dimensional model, which was based on a photograph of a television image of a real

thing! If that sounds confusing, it is hardly surprising. There is a complicated process behind Marburg's paintings.

The artist usually begins with a photograph, often taken from television. The photograph is therefore already quite removed from the original subject. Marburg then uses plasticine to make a small, three-dimensional model based on the photograph. The model is photographed and used as a reference for a painting. The photograph is usually enlarged and projected onto the canvas during this step. The end result is a smoothly painted image of a strange, artificial world. The colourful, lumpy forms represented in Marburg's paintings have a playful quality; however, their artificial qualities may also be a reminder of how information can become distorted as it passes from one point to another.

- 2 How has Marburg created an illusion of three-dimensional form in *Garden*?
- 3 Use contour lines or tone to make a circle, a triangle and a square become three-dimensional forms. What is the correct geometric name for each of the forms you have created?
- 4 For the two artworks pictured, list four words or phrases to describe the forms.
- 5 What ideas and meanings do the forms in each work suggest to you and why?
- 6 Draw a flow chart to show how Marburg creates her paintings. At each point in the process, indicate how the information she is working with changes.
- 7 Imagine you could somehow visit either *Covert 7 City* or *Garden*. Which place would you most like to explore? Why?



Amanda Marburg
Australian, b. 1976
Garden, 2002
oil on linen
181.0 × 120.5 cm
Private collection
Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery



(detail)



CREATE

Create a three-dimensional wild plant from another planet. Clay or found materials, such as foam rubber, would work well. Make your plant look as alive, colourful and interesting as possible.

Set up a classroom plant or flower show to display your specimens. You might even put your plants in pots. Think of a descriptive name for your plant.

Alternatively, instead of plants, your class could create buildings to make a futuristic city, with each member of the class completing one building or structure.

Take a photograph of your plant (or building) and use it as the basis of a two-dimensional image. Use appropriate techniques to describe the three-dimensional quality of your sculpture.

TEXTURE

3.12

REAL OR SIMULATED?

When you touch something, you feel its texture. Every object has texture: it can be rough, lumpy, scaly, slimy, smooth, furry or spiky. You can usually imagine what an object's texture will feel like just by looking at it.

You need to look for two sorts of texture when exploring art: real and simulated. Real textures are those that actually exist; they are what you would feel if you touched the artwork. Simulated texture is an illusion of texture. When you look at artwork, the textures can sometimes appear to be real.

Because people often associate textures with certain ideas or meanings, artists sometimes use textures in unexpected ways to surprise or shock. Examples of texture used in this way are *Gift*, an iron with spikes on the bottom made by Man Ray (1890–1976) in 1921, and *Breakfast in Fur*, a teacup, saucer and spoon covered in fur by Meret Oppenheim (1913–1985) in 1936.

Ideas and meanings in textures

Textures can suggest ideas and meaning. Smooth, polished textures usually look soothing and make us feel calm. Spiky, prickly or rough textures often look aggressive, or even dangerous, and can make us feel disturbed.

- 1 List three objects with different textures. List two words to describe the texture of each object.

- 2 Identify a texture that you strongly associate with an idea or meaning. Describe the texture and where it is found, and explain the ideas or meanings that you associate with it.
- 3 List examples and collect images of simulated textures and where they can be seen, such as simulated stone on kitchen benches.

Elaborate style

Vorticist is from the Tease series of paintings by **Deborah Klein** (b. 1951). In each painting, the focus is on a gleaming, smooth head of hair that has been carefully parted, twisted and knotted into an elaborate hairstyle. In some of the paintings, the hair is pinned in place with decorative combs. The focus appears to be entirely on the hair; there are no other clues about the identity of the person depicted.

Before the Tease paintings, the artist worked on a series of **linocuts** and pastels of tattooed faces and figures. It was the last work of this earlier series that sparked the artist's interest in hairstyles. Linocuts did not suit the effects she wanted to achieve, so the earliest works in the new series were paintings made with acrylic paint. Eventually, however, oil painting proved to be the most suitable medium, especially when she began working on a larger scale. **Oil paint** dries slowly, which means she could easily blend colour. Klein also liked the rich surface of oil paint.



Deborah Klein
Australian, b. 1951
Vorticist, 2004
oil and acrylic on linen
122 × 91 cm
Art Gallery of Ballarat
Purchased with funds from the Colin Hicks Caldwell
Bequest, 2005
© Deborah Klein

- List four words or phrases to describe the textures in *Vorticist*.
- Explain how Klein has used elements such as colour, line and tone to achieve an illusion of texture in *Vorticist*.
- What feelings, ideas or other meanings does *Vorticist* communicate to you and why? In your answer, consider the significance of focusing on the hair rather than on the woman's face.

Artist in the house

In the **installation** *The Macleay Women* by English-born Australian artist **Anne Graham** (b. 1949), the hair is real (or, more precisely, real imitation hair).

People often have strong reactions to the presence of hair, perhaps because it is so closely connected to the human body. What does the sight of those long plaits feeding through the bars of the window in the basement and spilling across the floor suggest to you? Some people may be reminded of the fairy-tale *Rapunzel*, in which the princess Rapunzel escapes imprisonment in a tower by using her long plait as a rope.

Other associations come from the context of this **site-specific** work. Graham was one of 14 artists invited to participate in a series of exhibitions at Elizabeth Bay House, Sydney, in 1997. Artists were asked to consider the history of the house and its occupants, and to create work that communicated something about the significance of the house. Graham's interest was in the Macleay women. Alexander and Eliza Macleay had six daughters, all with red hair. Graham used red hair as a symbol of the women.

- Why do you believe Graham used a material with the texture of real hair in *The Macleay Women*?
- Apart from the texture of the hair, what other textures are important in this artwork? Explain why.
- Suggest what meaning might be associated with the number, length and placement of plaits in this work.



Anne Graham
Australian, b. 1949
The Macleay Women, 1997
installation at Elizabeth Bay House



Follow the links from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to find an interview with Klein and the artist's website.



CREATE

Create an image of a person with an elaborate and extravagant hairstyle by gluing string and other textured materials to a heavy piece of card. Roll ink over the design and print it to create a **collograph** print.

Because the focus is on the hair, a head-and-shoulders rear view of your person would be best.



EXPLORE

Find an artwork in which you believe texture plays an important role. Explain how texture has been used and how it adds to the meaning suggested by the work.



DISCUSS

The following comments were recorded in the visitors' book at Elizabeth Bay House, where *The Macleay Women* was exhibited in 1997.

'Contemporary art belongs in contemporary museums not historic buildings. Maybe in 50 to 100 years it will be appreciated but not now in this context.'

'The introduction of contemporary art invigorates the house and makes some interesting connections with the past – makes it a living place.'⁶

What ideas or beliefs about contemporary art and its role are reflected in these comments? What would you write in the visitors' book? Explain.

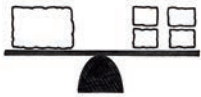
COMPOSITION

3.13

MAKING IT BALANCE

You have probably heard people speak of the importance of a balanced diet or a balanced life. **Balance** suggests a state where everything is in the right measure for the benefit of the whole.

A balanced artwork composition is important for the same reason. For an artwork to appear visually complete and whole, there needs to be a sense of balance in the way the art elements, such as colour, line, shape, tone and form, are used and arranged.



Large shapes or forms appear heavier than small shapes or forms.



Bright colours appear heavier than dull colours.



Warm colours appear heavier than cool colours.



Dark, thick lines appear heavier than light, thin lines.



Dark tones appear heavier than light tones.



Rough textures appear heavier than smooth textures.



Detail appears heavier than plain areas.



In a two-dimensional work, things nearer the edge appear heavier than things close to the centre.



In a two-dimensional work, things that look closer appear heavier than things that look further away.

Symmetrical balance

Some artworks, such as *A Man Taken Ill* by English artist **Laurence Stephen Lowry** (1887–1976), have **symmetrical balance**.

Think of a seesaw balanced with exactly the same weight on each side. If you ruled a line down the centre of a symmetrically balanced composition, you would find the same or very similar art elements on either side of the line.

Symmetrical balance usually looks ordered, calm and formal. It is often used in the design of public buildings or in formal portraits, such as school photographs.

Taken ill

The everyday life of Manchester, an industrial city in the north of England, was the main subject matter of Lowry's art. His paintings vividly describe the people, the terraced streets, the textile mills and the factories of the area.

Lowry worked for many years as a rent collector. During this time, he became familiar with many of the poorer areas and people of the city, and they often appear in his paintings. Although he was a very quiet character and did not form many close relationships, Lowry was a great observer of the people around him. Most of his paintings, such as *A Man Taken Ill*, are views observed from a distance.



Laurence Stephen Lowry
English, 1887–1976

A Man Taken Ill, 1936

oil on plywood

40.5 × 50.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased 1946 (1544–4)

© The Estate of LS Lowry/DACS. Licensed by Viscopy, 2016

- 1 Explain why Lowry's painting can be described as having symmetrical balance.
- 2 What evidence can you find in *A Man Taken Ill* that:
 - the view was observed from a distance
 - Lowry closely observed the people and life around him?

Asymmetrical balance

Some artworks, such as *Children's Hoops* by Australian artist **Ethel Spowers** (1890–1947), have **asymmetrical balance**.

Imagine a line running down the centre of this artwork. The arrangement of art elements on each side is quite different. A pair of scales is balanced as long as the weight on either side is equal; it does not matter if the weight is made up of different things. Artists can use combinations and arrangements of art elements to create balance in their compositions because the elements of art have different visual weight.

Asymmetrical balance is less formal than symmetrical balance and more natural.

At play

Like Lowry, Spowers took her subjects from life around her. Children playing and scenes of city life were common themes in Spowers's work.

Spowers's best-known works are **linocuts**. Linocut was a new and popular medium in the 1930s.

Spowers's modern approach to making art is seen in the strong, simplified shapes and colours that she used to suggest movement and energy in her print.

- 3 How has Spowers achieved balance in *Children's Hoops*?
- 4 Explain how the symmetrical balance in *A Man Taken Ill* and the asymmetrical balance in *Children's Hoops* contribute to the ideas or meanings communicated by each artwork.
- 5 Imagine you are one of the characters in either *Children's Hoops* or *A Man Taken Ill*. Describe what is happening, including how you feel and what you see and hear. You could present this as a diary entry for your character.



Ethel Spowers
Australian, 1890–1947
Children's Hoops, 1936
colour linocut
19.8 × 26.2 cm (block);
22.7 × 31.3 cm (sheet)
Coppel, ES 31
edition 9/50
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Felton Bequest, 1937
(435–4)

In 2000, a new visual and performing arts centre, The Lowry, was opened in Manchester. The Lowry houses the major collection of Lowry's paintings and drawings.



CREATE

Make a series of photographic portraits of your family or a group of friends. Try different arrangements, including some with symmetrical balance and some with asymmetrical balance. Before you begin, think about all the elements that need to be balanced in the portrait. Consider the colours, shapes and textures in the background and on the people.

Choose two of your photographs and note what you believe was successful and unsuccessful about each arrangement.



EXPLORE

Lowry and Spowers lived and worked at about the same time. Look at the work of each artist and find out more about each artist's life.

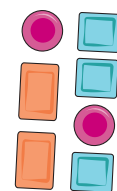
Look for three facts that you think explain something about each artist's work. What do you believe each fact adds to your understanding of the artist's work?



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to learn about the art and life of Lowry on the website of The Lowry.



Symmetrical balance



Asymmetrical balance

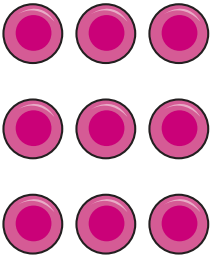
COMPOSITION

3.14

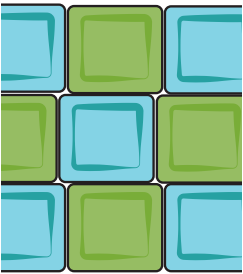
UNITY AND VARIETY

When things or people are united, they work together as a whole. In the composition of an artwork, unity is achieved when all the art elements work together to create a strong visual whole.

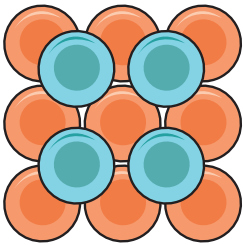
A unified composition often contains some variety in the art elements, but this can make a composition more interesting.



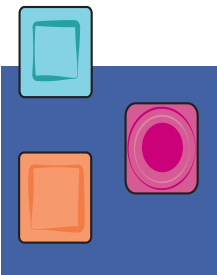
Repetition



Harmony



Overlapping



Linking

Unity

One way of creating **unity** is through repetition. A team in uniform looks united because each team member is dressed in the same way. In an artwork, artists sometimes create unity by repeating the same element, such as a particular colour or shape.

People who live and work in harmony usually have something in common that unites them. Harmonious art elements also have something in common. For example, green is in harmony with blue because it has some blue in it; squares and rectangles are harmonious shapes because they are both made from straight lines and right angles. Because harmonious elements are visually similar, when they are used together in an artwork, they can help create a feeling of unity.

When art elements in an artwork are overlapping, it forms a relationship between the elements that can help create a feeling of unity.

Linking art elements can also help create unity in a design. For example, a line may be used to link three shapes that would otherwise appear isolated from each other.

Variety

Even in a composition where art elements seem to be repeated many times, you will probably find some **variety** that adds interest to the artwork when you look closely. Look, for example, at the variety of blues in *The Melbourne Panels*.

In many artworks, variety is added by using **contrast**. Contrasting elements have nothing in common. For example, green

contrasts with red, jagged lines contrast with curved lines, and light tones contrast with dark tones. Because they look so different, contrasting elements stand out from each other.

Strongly contrasting elements can often add a feeling of energy or movement, and interest, to an artwork. You can see this effect in the contrasting blues and oranges in *The Melbourne Panels*.

- 1 Collect three images that you believe display unity. Annotate each image to explain what it is that unites the images. Is there repetition, harmony, overlapping or linking of elements?
- 2 Collect three images of artworks, outfits, rooms, buildings or environments that you believe show the use of variety to add interest to a design. Annotate the images to explain where and how variety has been added.



Jon Cattapan
The Melbourne Panels, 2003 (detail)



A city alive

The Melbourne Panels by Australian **Jon Cattapan** (b. 1956) is a very large **triptych** painting where colour, line and shape work together to create a powerful impression of a busy city.

Can you see how repetition and harmony of colour, line and shape help unify the design of this painting? Did you notice that the red used in some large areas of the painting is repeated in tiny dots? Contrasts of colour, line and shape are also used in the painting to add variety and interest.

Cities have been a strong theme in the work of Cattapan for many years. In many of his city paintings, the city is portrayed as though viewers are looking down from a very tall building, or even an aeroplane. *The Melbourne Panels* includes a number of city landmarks, but the artist is not interested in describing or mapping the city in a realistic way.

The buildings hover ghost-like on a sea of aqueous blue that ebbs and flows from the deep violet-blues, which dominate the distance, to the milky pools of colour in the foreground. Some areas are illuminated by the glow of brilliant reds and oranges that suggest heat and pulsing energy. Complex networks of dotted lines link the buildings and extend into the distance. The lines could suggest street lights or car lights, or they could be seen as representing forms of connection in the city, such as data communication. The artist leaves it to your imagination.

3 Annotate an image or explain in words where you can find evidence in *The Melbourne Panels* of:

- repetition, harmony, overlapping and linking to create unity
- contrast to add interest.

4 Compare *The Melbourne Panels* with *Collins St., 5 p.m.* by John Brack (p. 94) or *The Pioneer* by Frederick McCubbin (p. 104).

- For each painting, consider the:
 - aspect of the place that is represented
 - art elements
 - design principles, especially unity and variety
 - painting technique
 - meanings or ideas communicated about the place.
- List three ways each painting reflects the time in history in which it was made.
- Which painting interests you the most and why?

Jon Cattapan
 Australian, b. 1956
The Melbourne Panels, 2003
 oil on canvas
 (a–c) 200.6 × 545.0 cm
 (overall)
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Commissioned through
 the NGV Foundation by
 The Hugh DT Williamson
 Foundation, Founder
 Benefactor, 2003
 (2003.655.a–c)
 © courtesy of the artist



CREATE

Imagine you own a shop. It can sell whatever you like; use your imagination.

Draw your shopfront on a large sheet of paper. Make sure that your shop has a very big window that you can fill with an interesting display of products. You can draw, paint or make a collage of your display, but your display should demonstrate art principles, such as balance, unity and variety.

Make a class display of all the shops. Put them in a row to create an interesting streetscape and do some window shopping.

COMPOSITION

3.15

RHYTHM AND FOCAL POINT

In the composition of an artwork, rhythm and focal point create movement and focus.

Rhythm

When you listen to music, the repetition of beats creates a pattern called a **rhythm**. Visual rhythms are created by the repetition of art elements in the design of an artwork. The repetition creates a pattern that you follow with your eyes. Visual rhythms are an important way of suggesting movement in art.

City rhythms

Both *Collins St., 5 p.m.* by **John Brack** (1920–1999) and *The Bridge in-Curve* by **Grace Cossington Smith** (1892–1984) are paintings about a city, yet each painting has different visual rhythms that communicate the artists' ideas about the cities.

In Brack's painting, the repetition of vertical lines, squared shapes and dull colours, and the spaces between them, create a regular, steady rhythm. The orderly pattern of lines, shapes, spaces and colours has been used by the artist to suggest the regular, even monotonous, routine of working life.

In Cossington Smith's work, the irregular, angular shapes of the buildings, pylons and bridge, the bright colours, and the obvious brushstrokes create a more energetic pattern. The visual rhythm in this painting seems to build up with nervous energy towards the massive arc of the bridge, culminating in a strong sense of forward, surging movement.

Focal point

Visual rhythm and movement in an artwork are often strongly associated with creating a **focal point**. When you enter some rooms, you find that they have an obvious focal point: a place that immediately attracts your attention. In a classroom, a whiteboard is often the focal point. Everything in the room is arranged to draw your attention towards it. Many artworks also have focal points that draw your attention to a particular area of the composition.

To learn more about John Brack, read p. 72.



Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to access education resources about Brack.



John Brack
Australian, 1920–1999
Collins St., 5 p.m., 1955
oil on canvas
114.8 × 162.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria,
Melbourne
Purchased 1956 (3302–4)
© Helen Brack

A focal point can be created using these techniques:

- Contrast can attract your attention because things that look different stand out. A light tone will stand out against a dark tone, red will stand out against green, and a square will stand out against circles.
- Size and placement can attract your attention. A large shape in the centre of a painting will stand out more than a small shape near the edge. You also tend to look at something when it has been placed apart from other things in a painting.
- Lines and visual rhythms in an artwork can be used to move your attention towards a focal point.

Some artworks do not have a focal point. Instead, they have a repetitive pattern that keeps your attention moving around the artwork.

A modern marvel

The Bridge in-Curve is a dramatic view of Sydney Harbour Bridge as it was being built. It focuses your attention on the space where the two massive arms of the bridge will soon join.

Cossington Smith felt that it was important for artists to paint modern city life. She also took a modern approach to painting her subjects, using strong shapes, simplified forms, bright colours and obvious brushstrokes.

A regular routine

Collins St., 5 p.m. does not have a single focal point. The regular visual rhythms in this painting move viewers' attention steadily through the entire scene rather than directing it to a particular point.

Like Cossington Smith, Brack was interested in painting modern life. During the 1950s and 1960s, he made many paintings about life in the city and suburbs. The artist stood in a doorway in Melbourne's Collins Street every night between 4.45 p.m. and 5.30 p.m. for several weeks making drawings of the passing crowd in preparation for the painting *Collins St., 5 p.m.* In the final painting, the artist carefully arranged art elements to communicate his ideas about the city.

- 1 Make an annotated sketch of *The Bridge in-Curve* and indicate the techniques that have been used to focus attention on the space where the bridge will join.



Grace Cossington Smith
Australian, 1892–1984
The Bridge in-Curve, 1930
tempera on cardboard
83.6 × 111.8 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Presented by the National Gallery Society of Victoria,
1967 (1765–5)
© Estate of Grace Cossington Smith

- 2 What ideas or feelings do the visual rhythms of *The Bridge in-Curve* and *Collins St., 5 p.m.* communicate about the cities they represent? What is it about the visual rhythm in each work that communicates these ideas or feelings?
- 3 Collect images that you believe display a strong focal point or visual rhythm. Annotate two images to explain how the elements create a strong visual rhythm or focal point.



CREATE

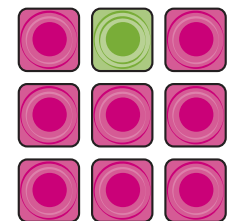
Create a two-dimensional image of a familiar city or town. Think carefully about how you will use art elements and design principles, especially rhythm and focal point, to communicate your ideas about the place you are representing. Do some research to find photographs or take photographs of the place and make preliminary sketches.

In your finished artwork, try to communicate an idea, feeling or quality about the place instead of simply portraying an exact physical appearance.

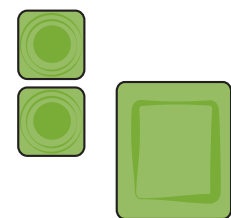


Follow the link from <http://artdetect3e.nelsonnet.com.au> to watch a video about Cossington Smith.

To see a preparatory drawing for *The Bridge in-Curve*, see p. 17.



Contrast



Size and placement

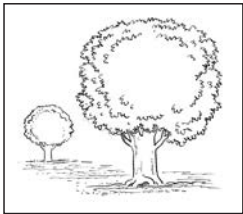


Lines and visual rhythms

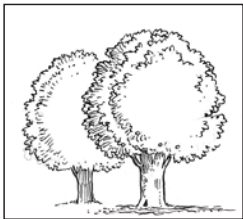
PUTTING IT IN PERSPECTIVE

Space is an important aspect in the composition of all artworks.

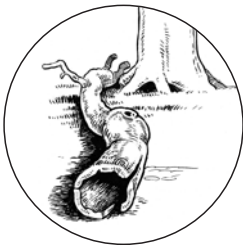
Sculptors arrange art elements in three-dimensional space. Painters and others who create art on flat surfaces arrange art elements in two-dimensional space; however, many artists working on a two-dimensional surface arrange art elements to create an illusion of three-dimensional space.



Size



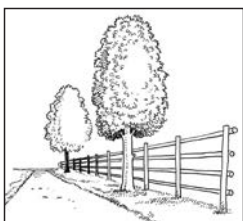
Overlapping



Foreshortening



Colour



Detail

Perspective conventions

Artists use perspective **conventions** to create illusions of three-dimensional space on flat surfaces.

The size of objects affects **perspective**; objects that are far away appear smaller than things that are near. To put things in perspective, distant shapes or forms should be smaller than close shapes or forms.

For an object to be put in front of another, three-dimensional space is required. Overlapping shapes or layers can therefore make things appear in perspective. The shapes or layers in front appear closer.

Three-dimensional objects have height, width and depth. When you look at an object in space, the depth lines appear shorter than they really are because they are projecting back into space. This visual effect is known as **foreshortening**. Foreshortening distorts the 'real' shape of the object but makes it appear in perspective.

When things are in the distance, they have less intense colour because of dust and haze in the atmosphere. You also see them with less detail than you see things close to you. Aerial or atmospheric perspective creates an illusion of space by showing things in the distance with lighter, less intense colour and less detail.

Bright, warm colours tend to appear closer to us. Cool, light colours seem further away.

Lines can be used to suggest depth and space. The lines that you see around you on buildings or on roads trace a path through space. Re-creating these lines on a flat surface can make things appear in perspective.

Linear perspective involves using:

- the **horizon** line (equivalent to the viewer's eye level)
- a **vanishing point** (or points) on the horizon line

- **orthogonal lines** that recede from the objects in a composition to meet at the vanishing point(s). Orthogonal lines are like guidelines that help artists logically work out the size, placement and form of objects in an image.

Most artworks use **one-point perspective** or **two-point perspective**.

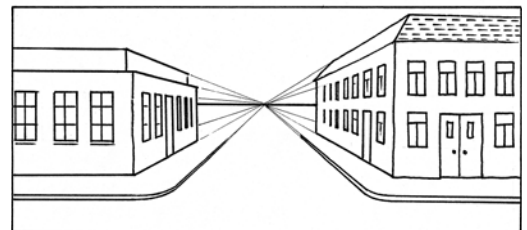
One-point perspective has only one vanishing point and is used for objects that are seen face on or parallel to the **picture plane**.

Two-point perspective has two vanishing points and is used for objects that are seen at an angle to the picture plane.

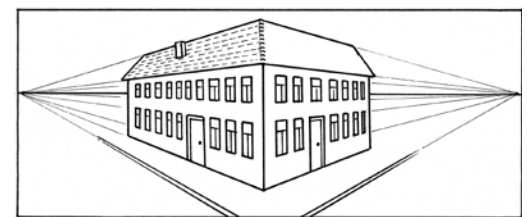
The perspective will depend on where objects are placed in relation to the picture plane. If you think of a two-dimensional artwork (such as a painting) as a window, the picture plane is like the glass in the window.

An amazing banquet

The **illusion** of three-dimensional space in *The Banquet of Cleopatra* by Italian artist **Giambattista Tiepolo** (1696–1770) is so strong that viewers almost feel as though



One-point perspective



Two-point perspective



Giambattista Tiepolo
 Italian, 1696–1770
The Banquet of Cleopatra,
 1743–44
 oil on canvas
 250.3 × 357.0 cm
 National Gallery of Victoria,
 Melbourne
 Felton Bequest, 1933 (103–4)

they can step into the painting and join the characters at the table. The receding lines of the floor tiles highlight the one-point perspective that Tiepolo has used to create an illusion of space.

The Banquet of Cleopatra is based on a story about the famous Egyptian queen Cleopatra. Cleopatra had a wager with Mark Antony, the Roman consul in Egypt, that she could exceed his extravagance and spend 10 million sesterces (a vast sum of money) on a single feast. Lucius Plancus, who sits behind the table, was appointed to act as umpire for the contest.

Tiepolo's painting focuses on the most dramatic moment of the story. The perspective lines provide an important clue to what is about to happen. Not only has Tiepolo used these lines to create an illusion of three-dimensional space, but he has also used them to direct attention to the **focal point** of the painting, near Cleopatra's raised hand. The gestures and glances of many of the figures also direct attention to this point.

At the focal point, Cleopatra is holding a very large and exceedingly valuable pearl earring. She wears another on her ear. After the first course of her banquet, Cleopatra had a servant bring her a glass of strong vinegar. She dropped her priceless pearl into the vinegar, the pearl dissolved and she drank it.

EXPLORE

Create a set of instructions that explains how to draw a few basic objects in one-point and two-point perspective. Include drawings as well as written explanation. Your guide should include the terms 'vanishing point', 'orthogonal' and 'horizon'.

With this exceptionally extravagant single drink, she easily won the wager.

1 Create an annotated copy of *The Banquet of Cleopatra* and identify:

- the vanishing point, the horizon and the main orthogonals
- the ways in which Tiepolo focuses attention on Cleopatra's hand
- the conventions that Tiepolo has used to create an illusion of three-dimensional space.



The **foreground** of a two-dimensional artwork is the area that appears closest to us. The **background** is the area that appears most distant. The **middleground** is the area between the foreground and the background.

In an artwork, each of these areas usually has different qualities to create an illusion of depth and space.

OTHER PERSPECTIVES

3.17

A MATTER OF CONVENTION

The conventions traditionally used in **western art** for representing perspective (pp. 96–7) are only one way of portraying space on a flat surface. When you explore the art of different times and places, you discover that there are many other ways of representing space.

A **stela** is a rectangular stone slab.

An ancient perspective

Most artworks made by the ancient Egyptians were associated with rituals and beliefs related to life after death.

This **stela** shows Mentuwoser, an official, at his funeral banquet. He is seated at a table loaded with food. Can you see the loaves of bread, meat and vegetables? The two small figures on the bottom right are family members. Mentuwoser's daughter is kneeling and holding a lotus; his father offers food and drink. Above these two figures, Mentuwoser's

son is summoning his father's spirit. The hieroglyphs explain details of Mentuwoser's work and his many good deeds.

The stela not only provided evidence that Mentuwoser was worthy of a life after death but also helped ensure that Mentuwoser would always be honoured and provided for by his family.

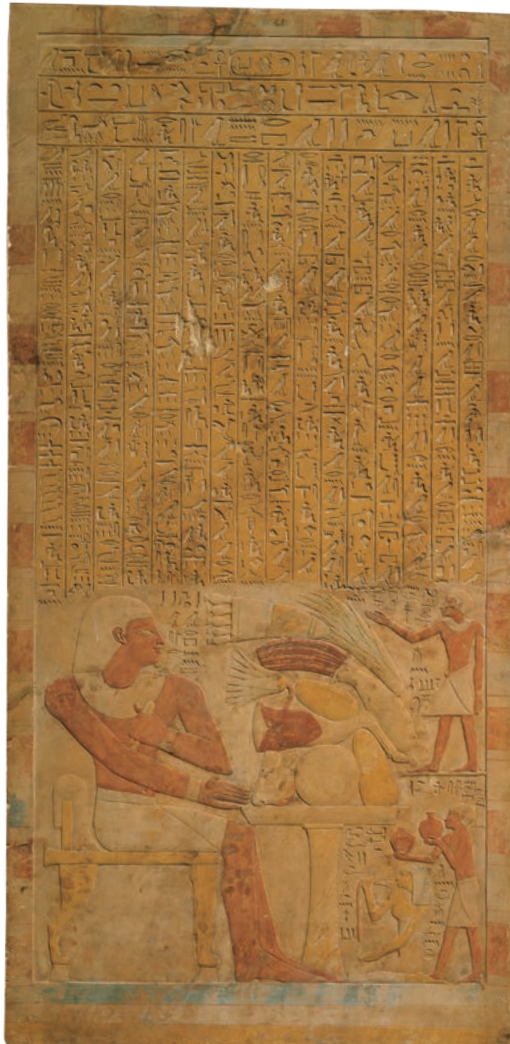
The ancient Egyptians developed many art conventions. The conventions, including those used to represent space and the human figure, ensure that the important messages were clearly communicated and understood.

Conventions for representing the human body in ancient Egyptian art were more focused on ensuring that images were clear and in order than on mimicking their real appearance. Each figure was assembled from body parts shown using different **viewpoints**; the head, legs and feet are shown in profile, from the side, while the eye and torso are shown from the front. Doing this helped ensure that each of the major parts of the body could be seen in its most complete form. Convention also dictated that the more important figures in an image were shown larger than other figures.

Another convention of ancient Egyptian art was that people, objects and symbols were represented as clearly outlined flat shapes placed beside or above one another along a ground line. Elements were arranged in the two-dimensional space to allow everything of importance to be shown as clearly and completely as possible. Overlapping was generally only used for less important characters or objects because part of the object may be concealed.

1 Draw a small sketch of Mentuwoser at his funeral banquet with his family, but use some of the conventions for representing space commonly found in western art, such as overlapping and foreshortening.

Image copyright: © The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Image source: Art Resource, NY



(detail)

Stela of Mentuwoser,

c. 1955 BCE
painted limestone
49.8 × 104.1 cm
Gift of Edward S Harkness,
1912 (12.184)
The Metropolitan Museum
of Art

- 2 Draw a small sketch of *The Banquet of Cleopatra* (p. 97). Focus only on the main characters and use the ancient Egyptians' conventions for representing space and the human figure.

A view of court life

Dewali Celebrations at Kotah provides a fascinating view of life at a Rajput court in the late seventeenth century.

The scene is shown in intricate detail and using multiple **viewpoints**. Some parts of the palace are shown from a **bird's-eye view** or perspective and have a plan-like appearance. Other parts of the painting feature evidence of different perspective conventions, including **linear perspective** to describe the elaborate architecture and atmospheric perspective in the landscape.

Vivid colour focuses attention on the animated activity of the figures in several sections of the composition. Can you see how the relative importance of different people is indicated by their size?

The exact subject of the painting is not known, but it is thought to depict Dewali, the festival of lights. Dewali is an important Hindu festival held at Hindu New Year. The festival celebrates the triumph of light over darkness and good over evil.

- 3 Create an annotated copy of *Dewali Celebrations at Kotah* to identify the different perspective conventions used.
- 4 What clues can you find that this painting might represent Dewali?



Indian
Dewali Celebrations at Kotah, c. 1690
 opaque watercolour and gold paint on paper
 48.2 × 43.8 cm (image)
 National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
 Felton Bequest, 1980 (AS68–1980)

Traditionally in India, religious narratives and *ragamala* paintings, images celebrating musical melodies (*ragas*), were the main forms of painting at the Rajput court; however, from the eighteenth century, portraits and images depicting daily life at court – including religious festivals, performances and leisure activities – emerged as the most popular subjects. *Dewali Celebrations at Kotah* is an early example of this latter form of painting.

EXPLORE

Choose two landscape paintings that were painted in different places and times.

- Describe how each artist represents space in the landscape. Does it appear to be two-dimensional or three-dimensional? Why?
- Suggest factors that might have influenced the way each artist has represented space, such as culture, tradition or personal interests.

CREATE

Create a two-dimensional artwork about a special meal, banquet or celebration. It may be a banquet with a fantastic feast (such as Cleopatra's), a more humble meal (such as Mentuoser's) or a significant cultural celebration (such as Dewali). Think about the people, objects and activities you will include.

Consider the perspective convention you will use to best represent your subject.

Before you begin, you may like to collect images by other artists who have painted banquets, meals or celebrations.