

ARTWISE 2

VISUAL ARTS 9–10

SECOND EDITION

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SECOND EDITION

Glenis ISRAEL



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INTRODUCTION

This introduction provides a summary of the key content areas of the Visual Arts 7–10 syllabus. The 'About Artwise 2' section on pages xx–xxi shows how the content and features have been organised to give you more detailed information on these key areas of understanding and skills, including information on related artists and questions to develop your understanding of the Visual Arts.

SYLLABUS CONTENT AREAS

THE FRAMES

Subjective Frame

Definition: personal response or experience by artist — feelings, fears, dreams; emotive artworks; intuitive, imaginative; inner consciousness, immediate sensory experiences

Key words: feelings, mood, imagination, dreams

Acronym (to help you remember the key words): Five Men In Darwin

Consider: different emotions (e.g. loneliness, anxiety, sorrow, joy, agony, love, pain, loss, obsession, excitement, fear)

Structural Frame

Definition: the language of signs, symbols, codes and conventions used by the artist to communicate

Key words: composition, symbols, codes, technique

Acronym: Computer Systems Can Talk

Consider: line, colour, tone, texture, text

Cultural Frame

Definition: the artist's response to or comments on his or her cultural context and society's values

Key words: society, race, gender, beliefs

Acronym: Sexy Rats Go Bowling

Alternative key words: context, attitudes, beliefs, society

Alternative acronym: Clouds Are Being Silly

Consider: war, violence, consumerism, politics, class

Postmodern Frame

Definition: artworks that challenge conventions, traditions and forms of art, often aiming to shock

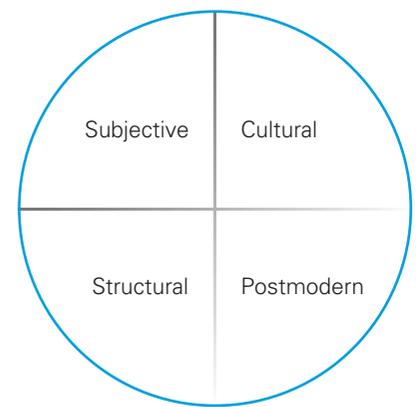
Key words: mass media, appropriation, pastiche, challenges traditions

Acronym: My Aunt Paints Cats

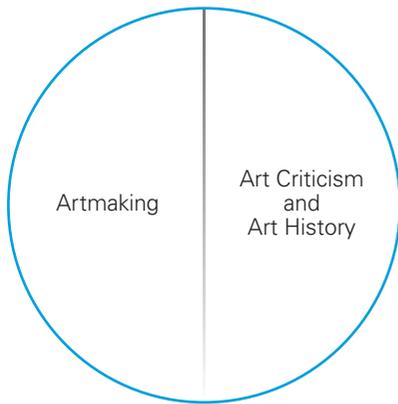
Alternative key words: questions, parody, satire, appropriation, pastiche

Alternative acronym: Queen Prudence Sits At Plunkton

Consider: use of technology; artworks often require audience interaction; satire, parody, irony



The different ways of seeing and understanding art



The things we do in order to study art

ARTMAKING PRACTICE

Definition: the intention and working methods of the artist; the way artists go about creating their art (what artists do before, during and after making an artwork)

Choices: media, scale, technologies, subject

Actions: reflections, studio space

Time and place: style

Frame: (Structural, Cultural etc.)

Intended reaction from audience: exhibition requirements

Key words: why (and what they communicate) and how (which can be influenced by ideas, theories, values, beliefs, society)

Consider: the decisions artists make

CRITICAL PRACTICE

Definition of an art critic: a specialist who interprets and evaluates artworks for readers, and whose judgements can influence an artist's career

Key words: persuades, informs, entertains, evaluates

HISTORICAL PRACTICE

Definition of an art historian: a specialist who researches artists' lives, the period they worked in, influences on their styles and how their art was produced, providing context for an appreciation of their artworks

Key words: informs, explanation, historical facts, context (time/place)

GUIDELINES FOR CRITICAL AND HISTORICAL WRITING

CRITICAL WRITING	HISTORICAL WRITING
An evaluation: 'Hearman has wonderful control over her chosen medium of oil paint, creating mood and movement through her blurring of forms and strong brushstrokes.'	An explanation: 'Idealised human figures representing gods, goddesses or heroes were the chief subjects of Greek sculpture.'
opinion, judgement: 'beautifully painted', 'suggests anger'	facts, information: 'commissioned by the Medici family'
Personal responses/analysis: 'I sense a mood of', 'full of subtle meaning', 'to me it all shows', 'we can see a hint of ...'	Context — place, time, style: 'an early Dutch Baroque artist', 'it is known that in 1930 he ...'
description (identifying qualities)	definition (analysing evidence)
An interpretation offered: 'Swirling clouds are gathering at the top of the painting in a disturbing way, like a prophecy of doom, perhaps a warning of the Crucifixion to come.'	Known purpose/intention: 'El Greco's principal means of expression were light and colour'; 'Schwitters was very sensitive to surface and balance, and created a feeling of harmony in his artwork.'
possible meaning	writings from or about artist
Personal knowledge of artist	Comparison with other artists
inform, convince, persuade	explains influences and significance
Often passionate writing: 'The face is bold, exciting and intriguing.'	Matter-of-fact writing: 'In 1961 Lichtenstein began using cartoon images.'
influences the reader	states importance to art history
Asks questions: What does it mean? How does it express that meaning? Is it effective?	Asks the questions: Where did it come from? What is its social background?
creates artist's reputation: 'Gary Hill is one of the most important contemporary artists working in interactive video installations.'	creates or challenges history: 'Through the process of recycling and giving artworks new meaning, Sherrie Levine forces us to consider the value, significance and purpose of art.'

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The agencies of the artworld are the artists, artworks, audience and wider world. It is no longer enough to see the artwork as always a separate, discrete object. We need to consider the relationships or interactions among artist, world and audience.

The artist

The artist may in fact be the artwork or be linked to it closely on an emotional level. Alternatively, the artist may develop the concept rather than the artwork itself, which is created with the assistance of technically skilled collaborators.

The artist's intention must also be considered: is it, for example, to inform, record, shock, challenge, critique past art or raise questions in the audience?

The artwork

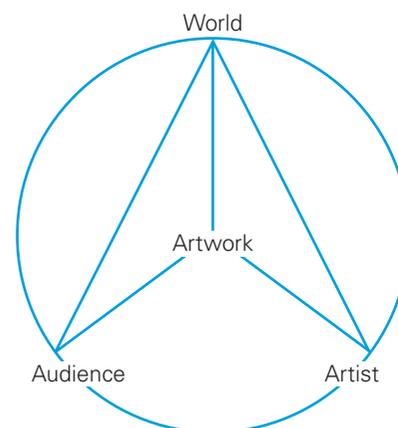
The changing role of the artwork means artworks may be permanent physical or transient objects, ideas or virtual reality images. The context (time, place, art historical style) and the way an artwork is displayed are important, aside from its physical properties. Is documentation important? What is the artwork?

The world

- How the artist's interests in the world are communicated: the influence of historical events, place and society
- Changing social values: the culture — both the artworld and mass culture — needs to be considered.

The audience

- How the audience are affected or involved, including interactive art
- Who is the audience — the wider public, educated art viewers, art critics or art historians?
- How is the artwork experienced? How is it presented or curated to the audience?



The agencies that make up the world of art

GRAPHIC ORGANISERS AND LEARNING SKILLS

BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a technique used to generate lots of ideas about a topic quickly. Brainstorming can be done individually; however, a brainstorming session with your group or class can be a very effective way of exploring a topic or question.

In a brainstorming session, everyone is free to contribute their ideas, which are all written down without criticism or discussion. All the ideas are then evaluated after the session. One model of brainstorming is DOVE.

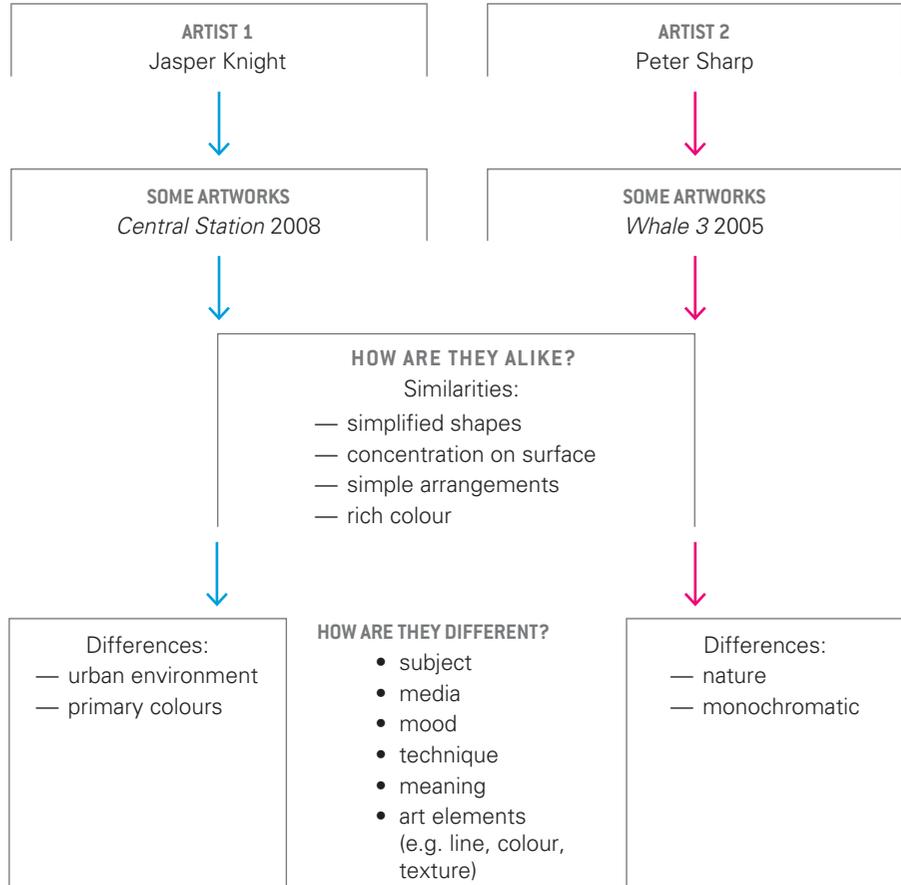
- D** — defer judgement on anyone else's ideas or comments
- O** — opt for the unusual and creative
- V** — generate a vast number of ideas
- E** — expand on the ideas by piggybacking off others

COMPARING ARTISTS AND ARTWORKS

The following examples show some formats that you can use to help organise your thoughts when working out the similarities and differences between artists and artworks. (Venn diagrams and double bubble maps are also useful visual tools when comparing and contrasting artists and artworks, as shown on pages xiii and xviii.)

Example 1

Question: Compare and contrast Jasper Knight and Peter Sharp as Structural Frame artists.



Example 2

Question: Compare the works of George Gittoes and William Kentridge in their approach to social injustice.

ART ELEMENT OR PRINCIPLE	GEORGE GITTOES	WILLIAM KENTRIDGE
Line	expressive, thickly painted lines as emphasis	sensitive charcoal line work to create form and external surfaces
Tone	colour more important than tone; clashing, bright colours in mid tones	tone used to create mood
Distortion	emphasis on enlarged heads and hands, fractured faces	minimal; more attention to realism and expression of mood

PEER EVALUATION

Peer evaluation — that is, evaluating other students' works — can be an effective method of gaining feedback and developing your own skills.

Method 1

This method is best used for the first time with a homework project so you do not know whose artworks are being discussed. The key idea is to help each other learn through constructive criticism rather than competition over marks (or being generous to friends!).

Step 1

Your teacher will write the marking criteria on the board, including a marking scale. For example, the criteria could be:

- skill with the media (variety of line work, subtle shading, colour blending ...)
- composition
- originality (impact or 'wow' factor).

Step 2

Lay out all the artworks on a long table, with students standing around the table.

Step 3

Students have five minutes to move the artworks around so that the artworks they consider to be most successful are at one end of the table and those that need more work are at the opposite end. This ordering forms a rough guide, not a linear rank order, and may change after discussion. (Your teacher will have the final say on rank and mark, but may be open to students' opinions and judgements.)

RULES FOR PEER EVALUATION

- Refer to 'the artist' in your discussion, not the name of the student.
 - When you volunteer to talk about an artwork, you must give a positive comment first, then give advice on how it can be improved. Never simply say that an artwork is 'not good'.
 - Every student should have a turn and you do not need to start with the works that you think are better ones.
-

Communicating

When one student is speaking about an artwork, all students can be asked to expand on the vocabulary used by the student. Suggest alternatives for overused words such as 'good' and 'nice', for example, 'exciting', 'skilful', 'individual', 'creative'.

Marking

After discussion of the artworks, they might be given marks by voting with a show of hands. Rather than marking the poorer works at this stage, allow students the opportunity to work on them again and resubmit them for marking by the teacher at a later date.

Personal learning

After a peer evaluation process, write an individual reflection in which you:

- monitor your own learning
- reflect on your strengths and areas to be developed
- set new personal goals.

Consider what you have learnt from your peers and how to respond appropriately to their feedback.

Method 2

Work in groups of four and evaluate each person's work within the group as follows:

1. Write a positive comment about each artwork.
2. Write a suggestion for improvement of each artwork.
3. Sign your name below your comments.

Each student in the group will then have three evaluations that they can consider and can compare views and suggestions. It is then their decision whether or not to take the advice.

ESSAY PLANNING

It is useful to plan the structure of your essays before writing.

Example

Question: Both Caravaggio and Louise Hearman use tonal contrast as a major component of their artworks to create mood. Discuss.

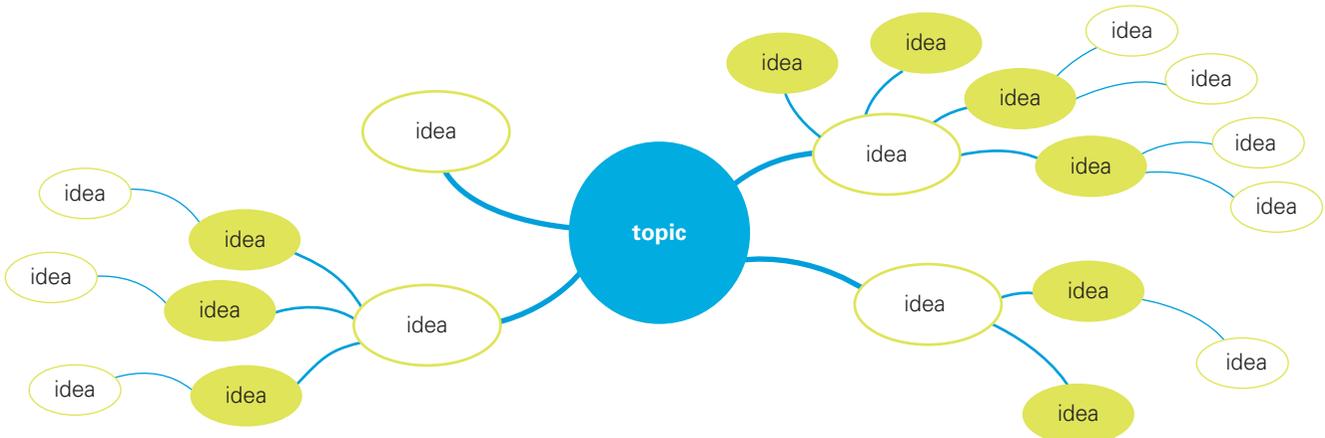
Suggested plan

INTRODUCTION	Define tonal contrast and briefly explain the importance of tone to create a sense of drama or emotion.
FIRST PARAGRAPH	Introduce the artist Caravaggio and explain, by analysing at least one example of his work, the importance of tone in his artworks to convey meaning and involve the audience.
SECOND PARAGRAPH	Introduce the artist Louise Hearman and explain how she uses tone in her artmaking and for what purpose.
SUBSEQUENT PARAGRAPHS	Identify and describe the similarities and differences in the artists' approaches and the impact of their use of tonal contrast.
SUMMARY	Draw a conclusion in response to the essay topic statement.

CLUSTER MAPS

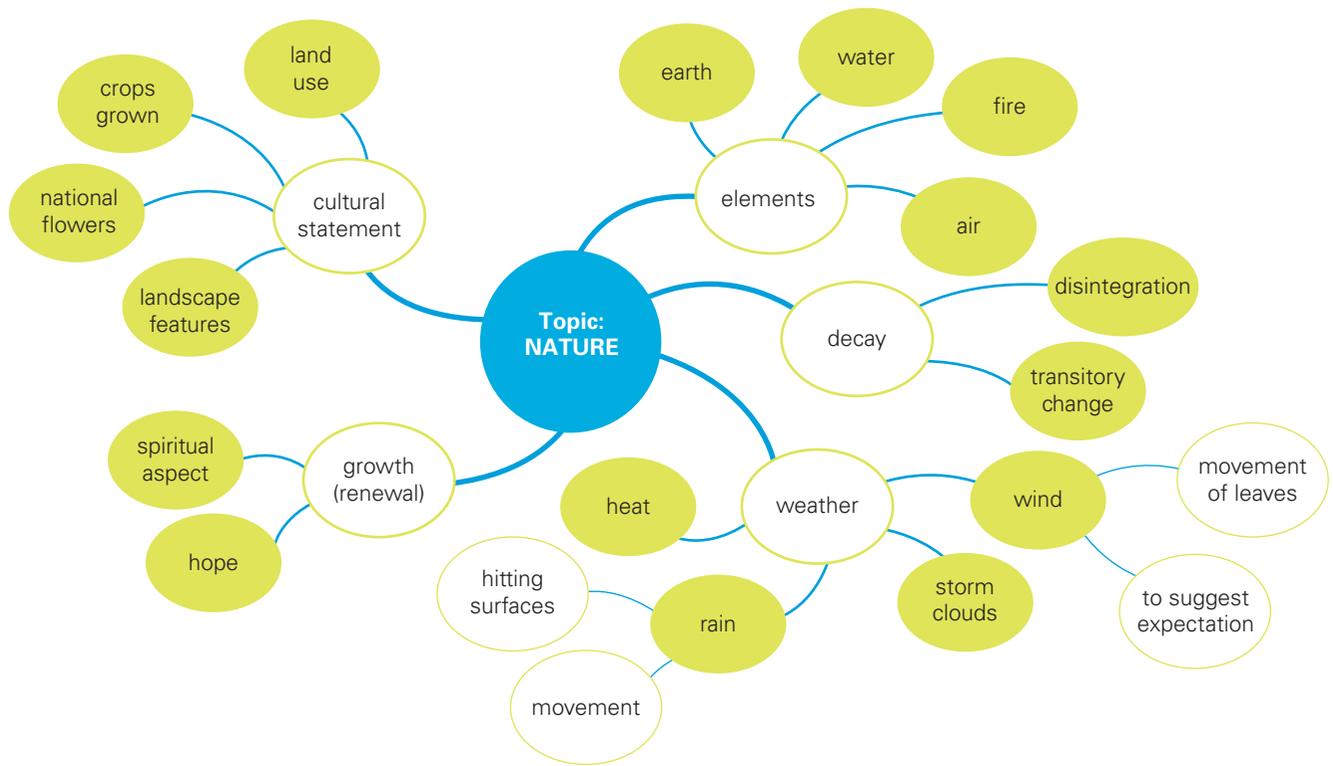
Cluster maps can help stimulate ideas when you are starting to explore a topic, whether for a written activity or for creating an artwork. In a cluster map, drawing lines between related ideas also helps to reveal links between the ideas or issues.

- Write the topic name in the middle of a page.
- Write in your ideas around it.
- Draw linking lines between the topic name and the ideas, and between the ideas.
- If your cluster map looks untidy, redraw it to move linked ideas closer together.



Example

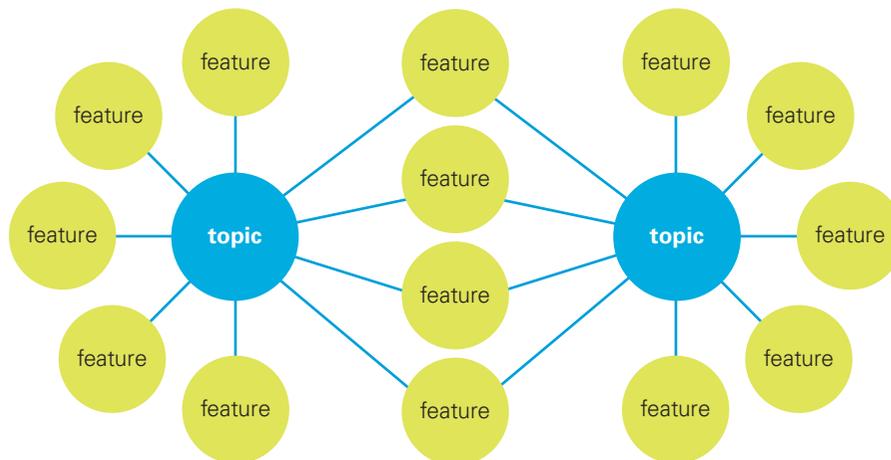
Question: Use a cluster map to gather your ideas for creating an artwork based on nature.



DOUBLE BUBBLE MAPS

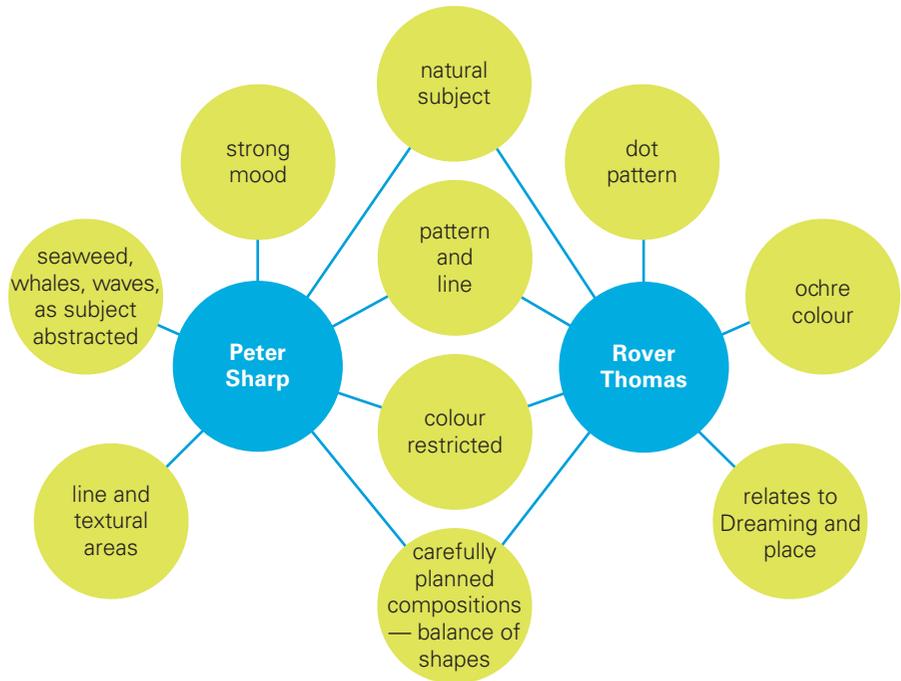
Double bubble maps help you to identify similarities, for example between two artworks or between the approaches of two artists.

- Read about single bubble maps on page xvi.
- Create separate single bubble maps for the artworks or artists that you are comparing.
- Identify the characteristics that are the same or similar.
- Redraw to create a double bubble map, placing the similar bubbles in the middle.



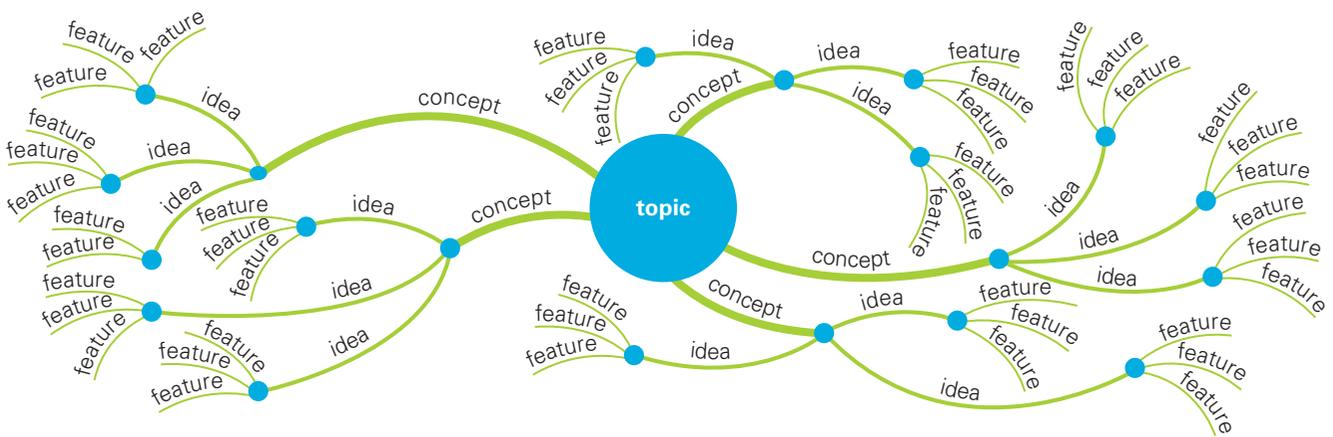
Example

Question: What similarities can you identify in the subject matter and techniques used by the artists Peter Sharp and Rover Thomas?



MIND MAPS

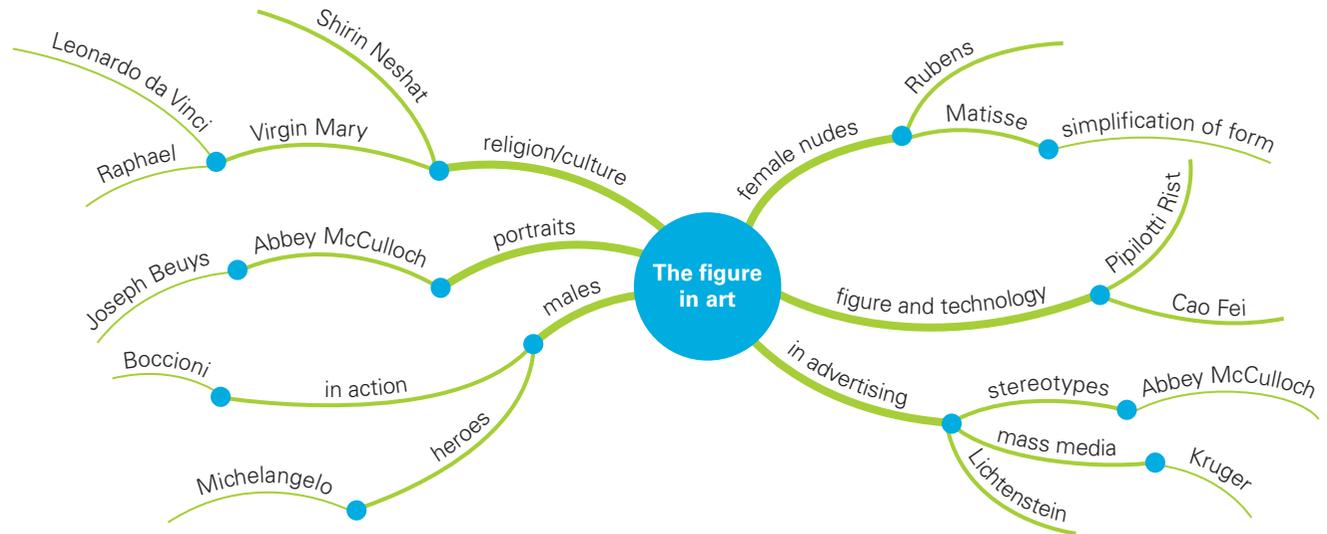
When you are exploring ideas on a topic or question, a mind map can help you to organise your initial ideas and to be creative in developing further ideas. It is literally a map of what is on your mind. Mind maps can also be useful when you are planning a piece of writing or reviewing a topic.



- Write the topic name in the middle of a page.
- Identify the main ideas or concepts in the topic and draw a 'main branch' for each one.
- For each main branch, add further ideas or features on smaller branches until you are satisfied that enough detail has been included.
- You can use different colours for different branches to clarify the organisation in your mind map. Drawings, photos or symbols can also be added to express your ideas clearly.

Example

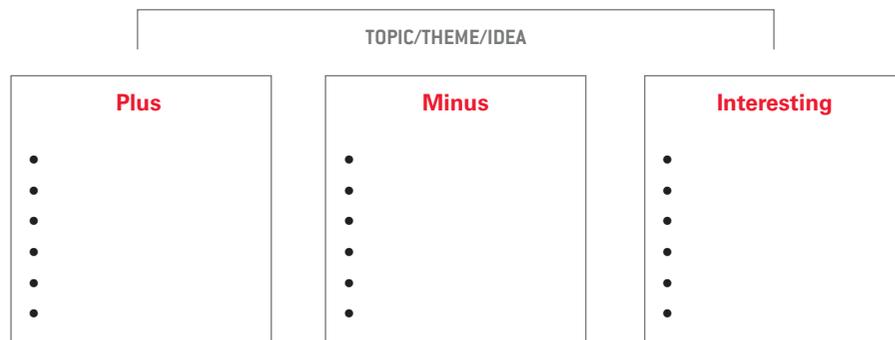
Question: Explore the many approaches to 'the figure' in art.



PLUS, MINUS, INTERESTING (PMI)

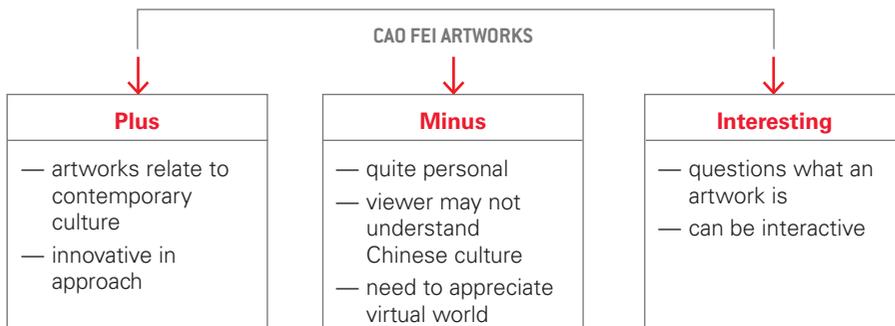
By focusing on the 'plus, minus and interesting' points about a topic or question, a PMI chart helps you to make decisions, for example when choosing a subject or materials for artmaking. A PMI can also be used as a way of evaluating and showing your perspectives on an artwork.

- Write the name of the topic or artwork in a box.
- In three boxes underneath, add your thoughts about the topic or artwork — what is good, bad or interesting about it.



Example

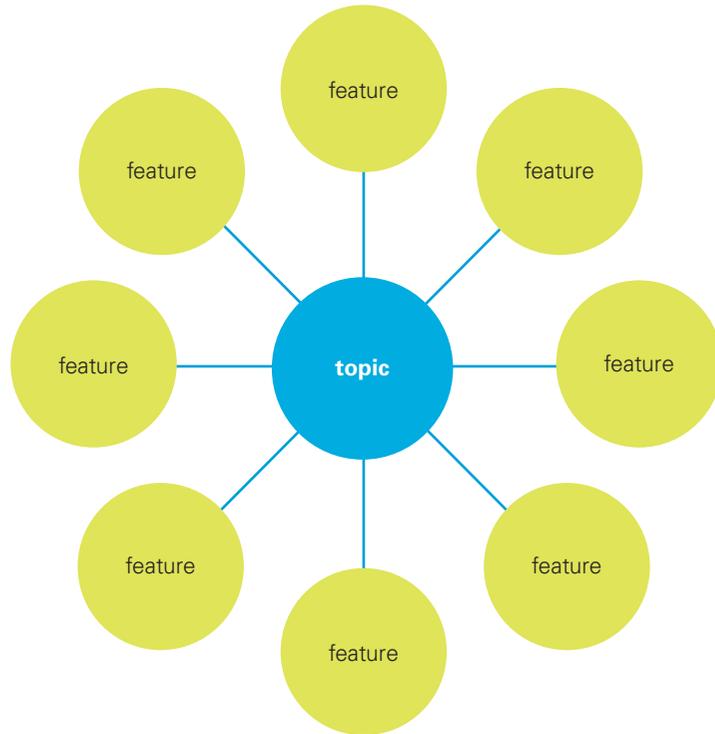
Question: Evaluate the artworks of Cao Fei.



SINGLE BUBBLE MAPS

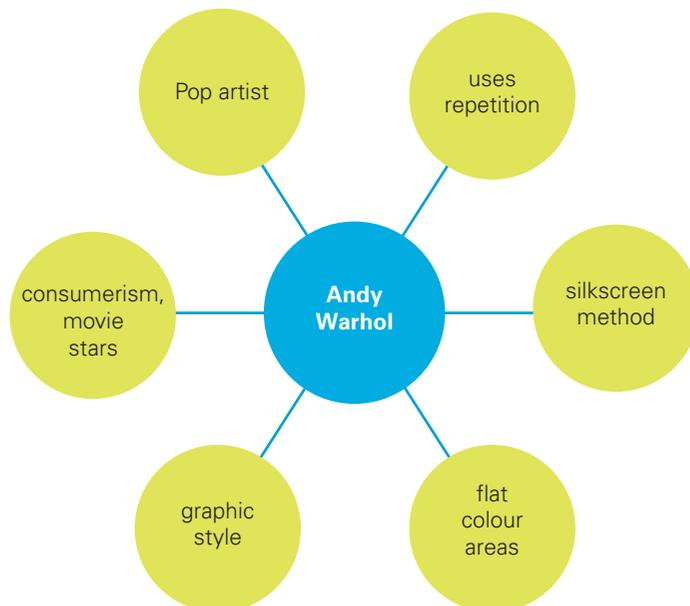
A single bubble map can help you to identify and summarise the main features of a topic, for example when analysing the issues or themes expressed by an artist, or the main art elements and principles used in an artwork.

- Draw a circle (bubble) in the middle of a page and write in the name of the topic.
- Think of key words that describe the artist's approach or the artwork's characteristics.
- Write these key words in outer bubbles, spaced evenly around the topic bubble.



Example

Question: List some characteristics of the work of Andy Warhol.



STORYBOARDS

A storyboard resembles a comic strip, briefly outlining the main scenes in a story. It can be an interesting way of presenting your ideas about a dramatic situation suggested by an artwork.

- Divide a page into equal sections (start with six or eight sections).
- Think of three main events in your story and sketch them into the first, middle and last sections.
- Sketch in other key events to fill out the story. You may need to redraw the storyboard neatly after your initial drafts.

A outline of scene 1	B outline of scene 2	C outline of scene 3
D outline of scene 4	E outline of scene 5	F outline of scene 6

Example

Question: Look at an artwork by Caravaggio. Think of a story that could be based around the scene.

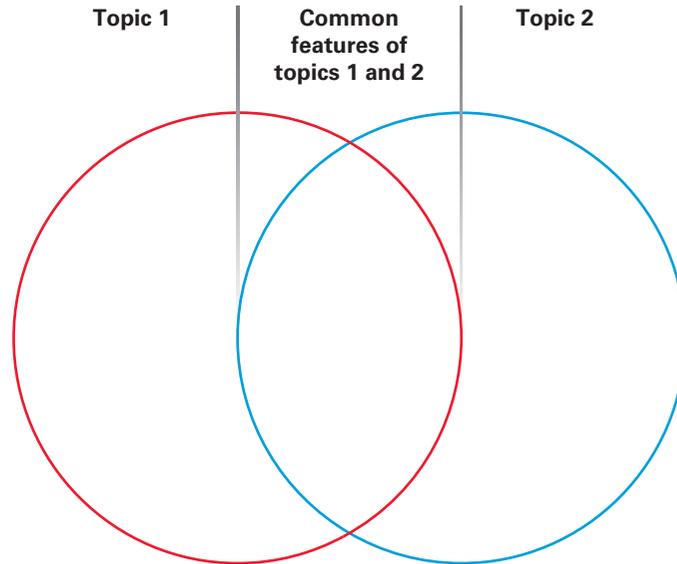
THE CONVERSION OF ST PAUL

1st scene A stable boy is attending to his horse.	2nd scene He feels uneasy and the horse is fidgety.	3rd scene He drops the grooming brush as he feels a presence in the stable.
4th scene An angel appears in a burst of light. The stable boy falls down.	5th scene The angel speaks.	6th scene The stable boy is overcome with spiritual emotion.

VENN DIAGRAMS

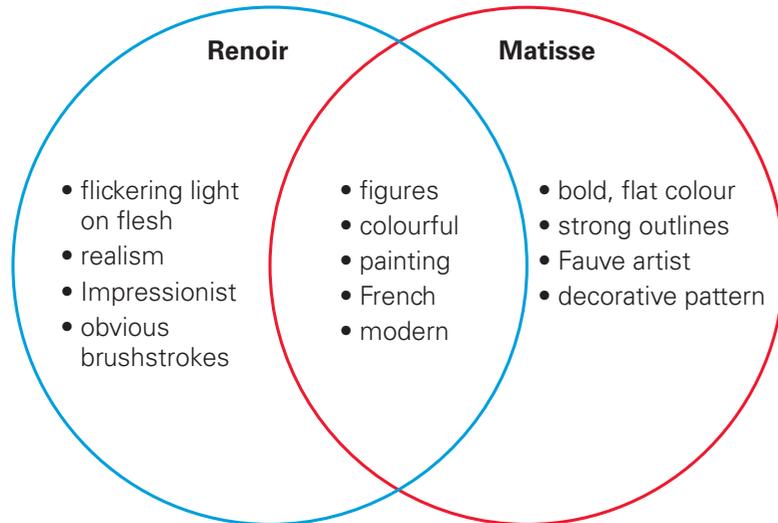
Venn diagrams can be used to show the similarities, or common features, of two or more topics, for example when comparing and contrasting artworks by two artists.

- Draw two overlapping circles and write in the name of the two topics or artworks.
- Identify the common features and write these in the section where the circles overlap.
- Identify features that relate only to topic 1 or to topic 2, and write these into the parts of the circles that do not overlap.



Example

Question: Identify some common features in the works of Auguste Renoir and Henri Matisse.



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ABOUT ARTWISE 2

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECTIVE FRAME

LIST OF ARTISTS

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 Caravaggio and Rubens p. 5
 Henry Fuseli p. 8
 Edward Munch p. 10
 Louise Hearman p. 13
 Irene Hanenbergh p. 16

eBookPLUS

INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.
 SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT2186

The *Subjective Frame* draws on the emotions and inner life of the artist, including their imaginings, dreams and fears. Artists express their personal, intuitive sensory experiences and feelings towards their world and others. Through the *Subjective Frame* artists examine humanity's weightier issues, such as life, death, love, loneliness, sorrow and anxiety, as well as the workings of the unconscious. Artworks created within the *Subjective Frame* often draw powerful emotive responses from the audience. A mood may be created using such techniques as expressive brushstrokes, tonal contrasts, imaginative fantasy imagery, or unusual images and colour selection. Subjective artworks, ranging from precise realism to total abstraction, express the personal and psychological experience of the artist.

Henry Fuseli
The Nightmare 1781
 oil on canvas
 101.6 × 127 cm
 Collection: Detroit Institute of the Arts, USA



(opposite)
 The Garden of Earthly Delights
 Allegory of Lust c. 1500
 Central panel of triptych
 220 × 97 cm
 oil on panel
 Collection: Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

eBookPLUS icon in chapter opening pages refers students to a *Vocabulary builder* interactivity for each chapter

eBookPLUS icons refer students to relevant eLessons and weblinks

Introduction provides an overview of key information for each artist, as well as vocabulary definitions of terms, highlighted in blue in the text

Louise HEARMAN (b. 1963, Australian; lives and works in Melbourne)

FORM	FRAME	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	VOCABULARY
oil painting	Subjective	Hearman responds to her imaginative world with strongly emotive artworks on an intimate scale that give the viewer a sense of unease.	ambiguity uncertainty, open to interpretation, with more than one possible meaning contemporary of this time, generally in the past 10–15 years; up to date disquiet unease, anxiety haunting unnerving, worrying subjective based on an individual's feelings, thoughts and imagination surreal dreamlike, unreal, fantastic tonal contrast light colours near dark ones (or white against black)

eBookPLUS **ELESSON: INTERVIEW WITH LOUISE HEARMAN**
 Louise Hearman offers insights into her work and inspiration. A transcript of the full interview is also available in your eBookPLUS.
 SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES0725



Untitled 2207 2006
 oil on masonite
 51 × 76 cm
 Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

CRITICAL STUDY

Hearman adopts a highly imaginative, **subjective** approach to her artmaking. This is a **haunting** image of a young girl, caught in murky floodwaters, who appears to be smiling. The odd harsh light illuminating the darkness, and catching the side of the girl's face, is disquieting. This is not a natural event: the flickering light seems to suggest more than just a lightning storm — perhaps flash photography or an unnatural light source. It produces a sense of foreboding — we think of the spirit world or an otherworldly setting. The dense, smeared green surface into which the girl is immersed contrasts with the thick, textured application of paint for the harsh pink dress. Layers of oil medium and gloss varnish have been used, the rich surface enticing the viewer. There is a feeling of uncertainty and mystery, created in part by the smudging of outlines, the slight lack of focus and dark lighting.

However each viewer interprets the imagery, the painting certainly sparks our imagination, making us think about possible meanings.

CHAPTER 1 Subjective Frame 13

LOUISE HEARMAN



Untitled #1058 2005
oil on masonite
49 x 48 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn O'Leary
Gallery, Sydney

CRITICAL STUDY

Although some viewers find her paintings nightmarish, the artist claims this is not her intention. Her haunting landscapes often contain hints of strange figures, as in *Untitled #1058*. Here a small figure (a child?) appears to be hovering among storm clouds. The sky is beautiful yet threatening. The harsh white light outlining the figure combined with the touch of colour on her coat contrast with the mysterious landscape below. The glossy, blurred surfaces entice the viewer despite the heavy sense of gloom. There is a hint of the **surreal** as well as beauty in Hearman's use of light and texture. Illusion and reality seem to exist side by side here, as in many of her works. It is almost poetic, suggesting human suffering. We try to unravel the secrets within the painting. Hearman has said that what is important in her paintings is the wide range of possible interpretations. She wants her works to capture the viewer's imagination. She heightens the viewer's senses in a similar way to a psychological thriller movie.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Hearman has been exhibiting publicly since 1987. Her work has been described as belonging to the Romantic tradition of Goya (page 31) and Fuseli (page 8). This is because some of her paintings also show human suffering, terror and nightmarish themes, including deformed figures and severed heads.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Louise Hearman is a highly imaginative and skilled artist. She exercises a wonderful control over her chosen medium of oil paint to create mood and movement. She employs strong **tonal contrast** and surface texture, using the emotional potential of paint to its limits.

She creates images of **disquiet** and at times horror, relating her subject matter to history as well as to contemporary issues. Her works often contain tension, produced by strong tonal contrast or the placement of figures or animals within the darkness of the landscape. Her highly emotional paintings, with their dramatic lighting and atmospheric effects, suggest secrets and mysteries. She seems to be exploring her own fears or anxieties through her paintings. Her powerful imagery attracts the viewer, her luxurious but mysterious surfaces holding our attention.

Hearman demonstrates that she knows the traditional 'rules' or techniques of oil painting of the great masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Goya and Caravaggio,

14 THE FRAMES

Engaging descriptions of artworks and artists under the headings *Critical study* and *Historical study*

Artist's practice sections provide insights into the artist's intentions and techniques, and often include quotations from the artist (*Artist's statements*)

A range of *Studying art* questions and *Essay questions* develop students' skills in interpreting and writing about art

Extracts from the writing of art critics (*Critical practice*) and art historians (*Historical practice*) when relevant

... she deliberately bends these rules. She is capable of the illusion of detailed reality yet more often creates a sense of **ambiguity**, of dramatic night landscapes. The viewer is left to imagine what is taking place, to anticipate the next event in the narrative (story). Hearman's paintings contrast luminous, shimmering colour with dark tones. The way she uses her brushstrokes both to add texture and to blur the edges of her shapes creates atmosphere and a sense of strangeness. Her paintings are generally of dusk and early evening. There is a strong personal note in her work, yet it is also a **contemporary** observation of social, political and environmental issues. The strangeness and feeling of time-warp in her works suggest the age of videos and virtual reality.

The artist's response to her environment is subjective yet her meanings are ambiguous. Louise Hearman is one of Australia's leading contemporary artists whose eerie landscapes are both unsettling and mysterious.

Art critic John McDonald refers to Hearman as a fastidious technician, a symbolist and a creator of 'sumptuous and unsettling images'. He writes: 'If her paintings are mysterious and suggestive, it is because they are fragments of narratives' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1999, *Spectrum*, p. 19A).

... she is a natural painter who can capture the glint in someone's eye or the play of shadows on a landscape with a few deft turns of the brush... Although Hearman paints by instinct rather than intellect, the results are powerfully suggestive. All of her paintings are unlit, but look as if they were lit by a few minutes and one can feel a story taking shape... The drama in these paintings comes from the play of darkness and light; the mystery from Hearman's penchant for unlikely juxtapositions. It is not unusual, for instance, to find a disembodied head floating in a landscape. But the head will never be grinning like a creature in a horror movie — the expression will be placid, even cheerful, in a distracted way. Hearman's figures are daydreamers who have left their bodies and formed some mystical union with the natural world.

Louise Hearman's images appear to be dissolving but she's painting with a very refined and highly-developed technique. It's as if the pictures are seen through the rain and the fog and the mist and through a passage of time which is related to the notion of memory.

John McDonald,
'She's painters who bite back',
Sydney Morning Herald, *Spectrum*,
3-4 December 2005

Tony Bond, contemporary art curator at the Art
Gallery of New South Wales, quoted in Stewart
Hawkins, 'Leap in the dark for modern mind-
fall', *Sagepaper Mirror*, 19 May 1996, p. 41

STUDYING ART

- 1 John McDonald and Tony Bond describe with admiration Hearman's painting technique. Find the phrases in their comments written from the *Structural Frame*.
- 2 Both critics also give their feelings about the mood of Hearman's paintings. Find the phrases that are from the *Subjective Frame*.
- 3 Find the words in each passage that suggest time as a subject or meaning in her work.
- 4 What methods has Hearman used to show us her view of the world (Conceptual Framework)?
- 5 The artist has said that what is important about her paintings is that they are open to a wide range of interpretations. She invites the viewer to decide on their meaning. What is your idea on what is happening in one of her paintings?
- 6 Hearman deliberately labels her works 'Untitled xx'. Why do you think she does this and could you suggest titles for these two?
- 7 **Historical study**
Art historians often place artists within a tradition or style of painting in order to show their significance. With what tradition has Hearman's work been compared?

ESSAY QUESTION

Use the information in this study and your own response to Louise Hearman's work and one other artist of your choice to explain how artists approach their artmaking from the *Subjective Frame*.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1 Analyse aspects of Hearman's work for any influence from the work of Leonardo da Vinci (consider his *Virgin of the Rocks*) or Goya.
- 2 Look up some photographs of the Australian photographer Bill Hanson. Consider similarities with Hearman in their mood while depicting the urban environment. Use a double bubble map (page xii) to organise your thoughts.

ARTMAKING

Create a mysterious drawing or painting in which objects or people emerge from the darkness. You might like to suggest a fear or anxiety you have personally experienced.

LOUISE HEARMAN

Suggestions for *Further research* and *Artmaking* activities

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127, 128 • **Mariko Mori:** page 114 • **Mary Boone Gallery:** pages 51, 57 • **Metro Gallery:** page 27 • **Museum of Modern Art (MoMA):** pages 182, 194, 223, 231 (top right) • **National Gallery of Australia:** pages 212, 221 • **National Gallery of Scotland:** page 176 • **National Gallery of Victoria:** page 218 • **Newspix:** page 144 • **OMA:** page 145 • **Photolibary:** pages 5, 10, 48, 49, 65, 155, 160, 163, 171, 174, 177, 195, 210, 231 (left) • **Queensland Art Gallery:** pages 46 (top), 47 • **Ronald Feldman Fine Arts:** page 82 • **Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery:** pages 14, 62, 63 • **Sangeeta Sandrasegar:** pages 44, 45 • **Scala:** pages 11 (right), 150, 151, 161, 167 (both), 187, 197, 209, 213 • **Shiraishi Contemporary Art:** page 115 (both) • **Shona Wilson:** pages 89, 132 • **Solway Gallery:** page 67 • **Statens Museum for Kunst:** page 183 • **Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art:** pages 90, 91 (both), 110, 111, 136, 137 (both), 139, 140 • **Tate Gallery:** page 33 • **Thielska Galleriet:** page 11 (left) • **Tim Olsen Gallery:** page 96 • **Tolarno Galleries:** page 13 • **Vitamin Creative Space:** pages 117 (both), 118 • **Warmun Art:** pages 20, 21 • **White Cube:** pages 129, 130 • **Yale University Art Gallery:** page 191.

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THE FRAMES

CHAPTER 1

SUBJECTIVE FRAME

LIST OF ARTISTS

Hieronymus Bosch p. 3
Caravaggio and Rubens p. 5
Henry Fuseli p. 8
Edvard Munch p. 10
Louise Hearman p. 13
Irene Hanenbergh p. 16

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INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2186

The *Subjective Frame* draws on the emotions and inner life of the artist, including their imaginings, dreams and fears. Artists express their personal, intuitive sensory experiences and feelings towards their world and others'. Through the *Subjective Frame* artists examine humanity's weightier issues, such as life, death, love, loneliness, sorrow and anxiety, as well as the workings of the unconscious. Artworks created within the *Subjective Frame* often draw powerful emotive responses from the audience. A mood may be created using such techniques as expressive brushstrokes, tonal contrasts, imaginative fantasy imagery, or unusual images and colour selection. Subjective artworks, ranging from precise realism to total abstraction, express the personal and psychological experience of the artist.

Henry Fuseli

The Nightmare 1781

oil on canvas

101.6 × 127 cm

Collection: Detroit Institute of the Arts, USA



[opposite]

The Garden of Earthly Delights:

Allegory of Luxury c. 1500

Central panel of triptych

220 × 97 cm

oil on panel

Collection: Prado Museum, Madrid, Spain

Hieronymus BOSCH

[c. 1450–1516, Dutch]

FORM

painting

FRAME

Subjective — Bosch creates an imaginative fantasy world.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

We can look at this artwork as pure fantasy, an expression of Bosch's wild imaginings. We can also examine its symbolism and explore its links with the society of his time.

VOCABULARY

allegories stories or poems in which events or characters have symbolic meaning

folklore traditional beliefs, stories, customs

sarcasm scornful or cutting comments

triptych a painting consisting of three panels that work together as a group

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BOSCH: WORKS

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Hieronymus BOSCH

CRITICAL STUDY

There is a strong element of fantasy and wicked fun, even **sarcasm**, in *The Garden of Earthly Delights*. Absurd human figures, horrendous demons, strange birds, and monstrous fish and animals populate this fantastic and terrifying world. By placing the heads of pigs, dogs, birds or monkeys on other animals or humans, Bosch symbolically represents the different vices (wickedness) that are part of human nature. It seems to be a devil-infested landscape. There is also a sense of a narrative (story) and unity in this wondrous, strange nightmare world.

Bosch's works began with accurate observations that were then transformed by his incredibly vivid imagination. His technique involves great attention to detail. The colour is rich but well balanced around the work. He worked quickly on white painted panels, adding glazes of colour then overlapping fine details of bright colour.

HISTORICAL STUDY

There is very little documentation on Bosch's life, as he left no letters or diaries. We know that he was originally called Jerome van Aken, that his wife belonged to a prosperous family and that he had no children. We also know that in 1486 he finished a **triptych** that his father had been unable to complete. None of Bosch's works are dated or signed, but more than 30 paintings and a small number of drawings are attributed to him. Although there is little evidence to help us link Bosch's art to his own life experiences, we can look at the way it relates to the society and beliefs of the time (*Cultural Frame*).

Bosch lived at the historical turning point between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. His art reflects an age dominated by death and harsh religious teachings. Religion played a big part in everyday life. About one in every 19 people belonged to a religious order, and there were many convents and monasteries. Bosch's paintings were moral **allegories**, intended to point out human weakness and wickedness (as in his painting *The Seven Deadly Sins*). He drew his subject matter from a study of magic, witchcraft and astronomy, and there are links in his works to **folklore**.

Bosch's work is rich in symbolism: black creatures represent the devil, a dead fish represents sin, and red berries signify lust. Creatures with long noses suggest evil, blades, knives and male sexuality. Large ears are to hear the music of the devil. Fruit and animals are erotic symbols inspired by popular songs, sayings and slang expressions of his time. For example, to 'pluck fruit' was slang for the sexual act, so in the right middle ground of *The Garden of Earthly Delights* we see the significance of the group of youths and maidens picking fruit. In the labours of the months (the seasonal calendar), May was the time of love and was generally illustrated by lovers embracing in a tub of water. Look again at *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and observe the lakes and ponds.

For his representation of sensual pleasure or lust, Bosch uses the traditional idea of the Garden (of Eden) and combines various symbols from themes of his time. Yet his art also shows originality and a fertile imagination. Among Bosch's main themes were fear, humiliation and torture.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Do a PMI (page xv) to help you analyse the work of Bosch.

Critical study

- 2 Find one phrase that evaluates Bosch's work (shows an opinion or judgement); for example, 'His technique involves great attention to detail'.
- 3 *Subjective Frame*
Describe areas in this painting that suggest Bosch had a highly developed imagination.
- 4 *Structural Frame*
List four symbols in *The Garden of Earthly Delights* and their possible meanings.

Cultural Frame

How does this artwork reflect Bosch's society?

6 *Postmodern Frame*

Do any of these symbols have the same meaning today? Where do we see fantasy creatures in our society? How are present-day monsters different?

Historical study

- 7 Historical writing generally *explains* the place, time, meaning and purpose of an artwork. What information is presented in the 'Historical study' section that helps your understanding of Bosch's work?

ESSAY QUESTION

Subjective Frame

'The element of fantasy and the imagination is an important aspect in many artists' works.' Write an essay on this statement, referring to at least three artists in your response. You might like to look up the Surrealists, such as Dali (page 200) and Magritte (page 203).

Michelangelo CARAVAGGIO

(1573–1610, Italian)

Peter Paul RUBENS

(1577–1640, Flemish)

FORM

oil painting

FRAMES

Subjective in their expression of emotional events; *Cultural* in their reflection of the values, beliefs and society of the time

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Caravaggio's paintings elicit an emotional response from the viewer. We are drawn into the picture. Rubens also evokes an emotional reaction from the viewer through his use of colour and tone, and the detailed, dramatic way he paints his subjects.

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CARAVAGGIO TIMELINE

Use the **Caravaggio** timeline weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a timeline of the life and works of Baroque artist Michelangelo Caravaggio.



Caravaggio

The Conversion of St. Paul 1601

oil on canvas

230 × 175 cm

Collection: Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, Italy/The Bridgeman Art Library

In this painting, Caravaggio realistically represents peasant life and the raw disorder of a stable. Yet this is the scene of a miracle — a moment of religious exaltation as Paul has a life-transforming vision. It is painted with dramatic realism and acute observation of detail. It is bold and exciting. Caravaggio uses a compressed foreground space to draw the viewer into the emotional moment. The background is completely dark, with strong shadows created by the sharply focused light. This is a superb piece of expressive religious painting.

CRITICAL STUDY

HISTORICAL STUDY

Michelangelo Merisi was born in Milan but grew up in a village in Lombardy, adopting the name of this village, Caravaggio, as his own. He had a turbulent, violent nature and his life was plagued with adventures, fights and escapes.

Caravaggio was the most successful and influential painter of the seventeenth century. Despite his relatively short career, he was an important innovator of the Baroque style. His religious paintings were unconventional for the time. He was a painter of originality, when compared with his contemporaries. He introduced a warmth of colour and an intense drama of lighting within his natural settings.

Caravaggio believed in unflinching realism to reflect the dynamic reality and emotional moments of life. At times his works are brutal and violent, such as the beheading depicted in *Judith and Holofernes*. The most remarkable characteristic of his work is his dramatic use of light and shade. He holds an important place in the history of art for his exceptional skill in infusing common people in commonplace settings with a sense of emotional intensity and vitality.

Caravaggio's bold, naturalistic style was well suited to winning back followers to the Church, as it appealed to the feelings of the onlooker.

BAROQUE ART

A seventeenth-century art style of the Counter-Reformation that made use of dramatic, emotional effects and strong tonal contrasts. Baroque art is generally recognisable by the strong contrasts of light and shade and the dominance of diagonal direction, which creates a sense of movement. Events are often caught in an instant of time. Images are highly emotional and dramatic. The Counter-Reformation brought about an increase in religious patronage. The churches that were built for the new monastic orders such as the Jesuits had numerous side chapels needing altar-pieces. The intention was to increase the people's devotion to the teachings of the Church. Strong religious narratives aimed to impress and instruct were commissioned.

CRITICAL STUDY

In *Descent from the Cross* (opposite), Rubens depicts a crucial moment in the Christian religious story of the crucifixion. A strong light falls across the figure of Christ as he is helped from the Cross, the white sheet skilfully placed to draw our attention to the central figure. The dark background and strong diagonal direction add movement and a sense of the moment. It is a highly theatrical, emotional representation of this event, the figures straining to support Christ's weight, the anguished expression on their faces heightening the drama. Rubens has cleverly balanced the diagonal downward thrust with the ladder and dish in the bottom right corner. The strong horizon line is repeated at top right with the horizontal beam of the cross.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Peter Paul Rubens, an early seventeenth-century artist, produced most of his work for the rich nobility and the Catholic Church, Flanders being a Catholic country, although his work was popular with all classes. After returning from Italy at age 31 and setting up in Antwerp he rapidly became the most sought-after painter in Europe. He ran a thriving workshop. Rubens was an extremely prolific (productive) painter as well as being employed as a diplomat. He painted mythological, biblical and historical subjects as well as landscapes and fine portraits. His works show great technical skill and a strong sense of vitality and emotion. He transformed canvases into lyrical expressions of movement, colour, tone and light that tell a vivid story or show the poetic beauty of the world. His highly dramatic works have a grandness of vision and scale, with vast space and luminous colour, but he also excelled at fine detail, rich, realistic textures and spectacular lighting. Rubens painted with rich, vibrant, glowing colours, applying his paint thinly yet in a painterly way.

His works also reveal his deep understanding of anatomy and his skill as a draftsman. His figures are full of vitality, their delicate complexions and soft flesh complementing the shimmer of silks and the sparkle of light falling on objects.

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RUBENS COLLECTION

Use the **Rubens collection** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and works of Peter Paul Rubens.



Rubens
Descent from the Cross (1612–14)
 Central panel of triptych
 oil on panel
 triptych 420 × 310 cm
 Wing panels are *The Visitation* and
The Presentation in the Temple
 Onze Lieve Vrouwkerk,
 Antwerp Cathedral, Belgium

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Subjective Frame

- 1 What makes either of these paintings seem religious to you?
- 2 What emotions do you feel when you look at these works?
- 3 Art critics often offer judgements or personal opinions rather than facts when writing about artworks. Quote any such sentences that you can find in the 'Critical study' section on *The Conversion of St Paul*.

Historical study

- 4 In the 'Historical study' section on both artists, find examples of:
 - (a) historical facts or autobiographical information
 - (b) mentions of time, place, patrons
 - (c) references to society or religion at a particular time
 - (d) mentions of style or art period.

ESSAY QUESTION

Explain how Caravaggio, Rubens and one other painter of your choice worked from the *Subjective Frame*.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Use charcoal to create a dramatic artwork based on an everyday event. Consider tonal contrast and an unusual viewpoint — perhaps close up, from above or from a distorted angle.
- 2 When learning as apprentices, artists would often copy the techniques of the masters. Choose a small section of either artwork and try to reproduce the painting quality, concentrating on the use of tone, colour and texture.

Henry FUSELI

[1741–1825, Swiss]

FORM

painting

FRAME

Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Fuseli depicts the world of his imagination into which he entices the audience.

ROMANTICISM (c. 1780–c. 1900)

Romanticism was an art style that emphasised emotions, with personal interpretations and free brushstrokes. The artists showed their feelings towards the imagined and real and were in awe of nature. Dramatic lighting was often used.

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FUSELI ONLINE

Use the **Fuseli** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online art gallery of paintings by Henry Fuseli.

CRITICAL STUDY

A young woman lies helpless, draped over her bed, perhaps tormented by dreams. It is an image filled with mystery and panic. As an expression of the unconscious and an investigation of the murky or indistinct areas between fear and sex, it was well ahead of its time.

Fuseli represents what the woman feels rather than what she sees. A monkey-like, gnome-like creature squats on her body. A horse with maddened eyes seems to pounce from behind a curtain as if it will burst through the canvas. The mood created is one of horror, suggesting nightmares and violent emotion. The space is shallow and the woman's hand reaches to the front corner. The horse's head with its luminous (glowing) wide eyes focuses our attention. This is not a scene viewed from a distance. The onlooker feels part of the drama taking place.

The Nightmare 1781

oil on canvas

101.6 × 127 cm

Collection: Detroit Institute of the Arts,
USA



In the late eighteenth century, people were increasingly interested in the past. In paintings, this was evident in a love of ruins and the use of legends and history as subject matter. In the case of Fuseli, it also involved an interest in the imaginary, or dreams. This was the Age of Romanticism (page 8).

Fuseli was born Johann Heinrich Füssli in Zurich, Switzerland, and learned the basics of painting from his artist father. It was intended that he become a priest, but instead, in 1763, he went to London to take up painting again. On the advice of the famous English painter Joshua Reynolds, Fuseli travelled to Italy, where he was deeply impressed by the ruins and monuments of the past. He also admired the work of Michelangelo. He studied in Italy for nearly 10 years.

Back in England, Fuseli's art showed classical (Italian) influences but it also became melancholy (sad). He developed his own individual style, delving into the unconscious. It was *The Nightmare*, shown at the Royal Academy of Art in 1782, that secured his reputation. There are several versions of the painting; in each the mood and subject are the same but the composition (arrangement) is altered. It is a devastating image of suppressed violence.

Fuseli worked in England for most of his career. In the writings of Shakespeare and Milton he found a dream-like universe that suited him. He began illustrating these literary works, and in 1779 he opened the Milton Gallery in Pall Mall with an exhibition of 47 of his own paintings. Educated by the Church, Fuseli was able to translate Shakespeare into German. His paintings became disturbing worlds haunted by the erotic and macabre (scary). Nocturnal (night) scenes became his specialty. His imaginative paintings, emphasising melodrama, fantasy and horror, became an important influence on the emerging Romantic movement. Fuseli was a friend of the painter and poet William Blake, and their work shares a similar imaginative intensity.

Fuseli was well respected and influential in his lifetime. He was elected to the Royal Academy in 1799 and his extensive writings on art included 'Lectures in Painting, 1801'. In the twentieth century the Expressionists and Surrealists, who saw him as a kindred spirit, rediscovered Fuseli's work.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 How does the painting make you feel (*Subjective Frame*)?
- 2 Think of four adjectives that you would use to describe this painting. (An adjective is a descriptive word that usually accompanies a noun, such as *handsome* man or *broken* cup.)
- 3 Describe Fuseli's use of light and the effect it creates (*Structural Frame*).
- 4 What role do the animals play in this painting?

Historical study

- 5 Name some of the artists and writers who influenced Fuseli.
- 6 In what ways does his work belong to the Romantic style of art?
- 7 Artists from which two modern art styles were interested in Fuseli's work?
- 8 Historical writing usually involves explaining an artist's work through facts about where and when they lived, or other artists who were of influence or comparable. Quote two statements or paragraphs on Fuseli that are typical of historical writing (as opposed to 'critical writing', which describes and gives opinions).

ESSAY QUESTION

'Romanticism was an art style interested in expressing the emotional and imaginary, often delving into the spiritual or the horrific.' Write a 500- to 600-word essay explaining Romanticism as a style and mentioning particular examples by Fuseli and William Blake.

ARTMAKING

Create your own nightmare world in a drawing or painting using a strong light source and a feeling of mystery. Conduct a peer evaluation (page xi) in groups of four after you complete the work.

Edvard MUNCH

[1863–1944, Norwegian]

FORMS

painting,
printmaking

FRAME

Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Munch expresses an individual emotional view of his world. The audience responds to the raw emotion expressed.

VOCABULARY

foreboding threatening, a sense of danger or evil to come
introspection looking inwards to your own thoughts and feelings

GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT (1905–1920s)

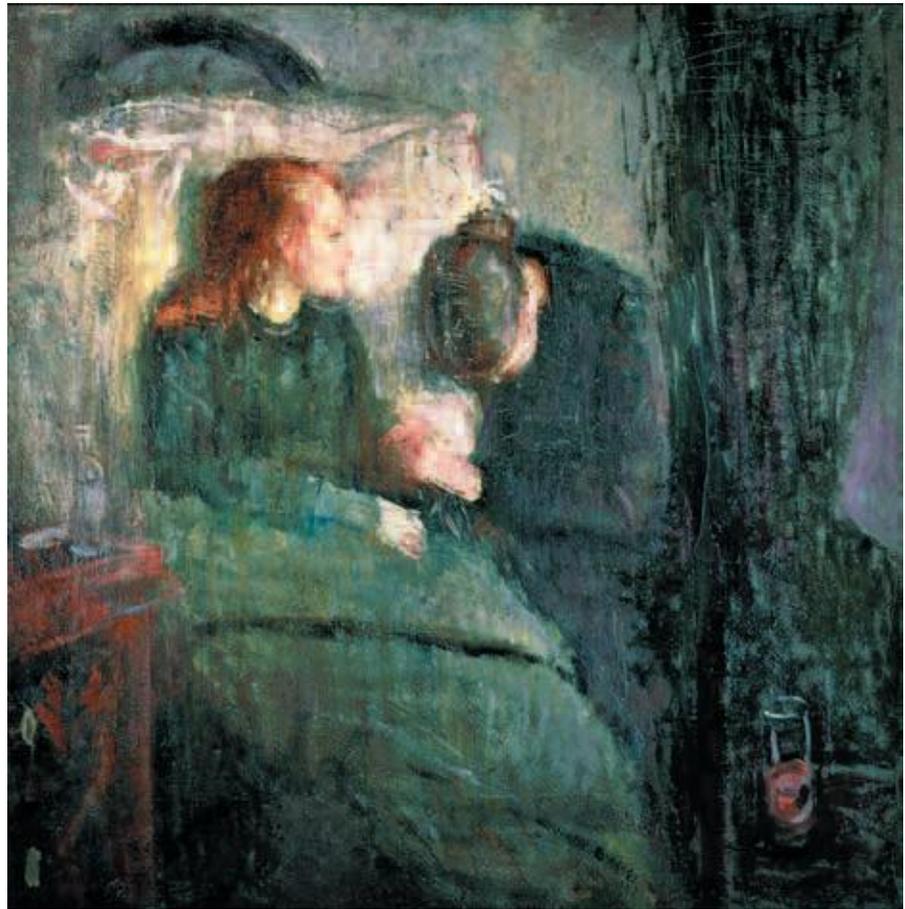
A group of modern artists, including Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Emil Nolde and James Ensor, who concentrated on expressing emotions using thick brushstrokes and striking colour.

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MUNCH GALLERY

Use the **Munch gallery** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online art gallery of themed artworks by Edvard Munch.

The Sick Child 1885–86
oil on canvas
120 × 118.5 cm
Nasjonalgalleriet, Oslo, Norway/
The Bridgeman Art Library



CRITICAL STUDY

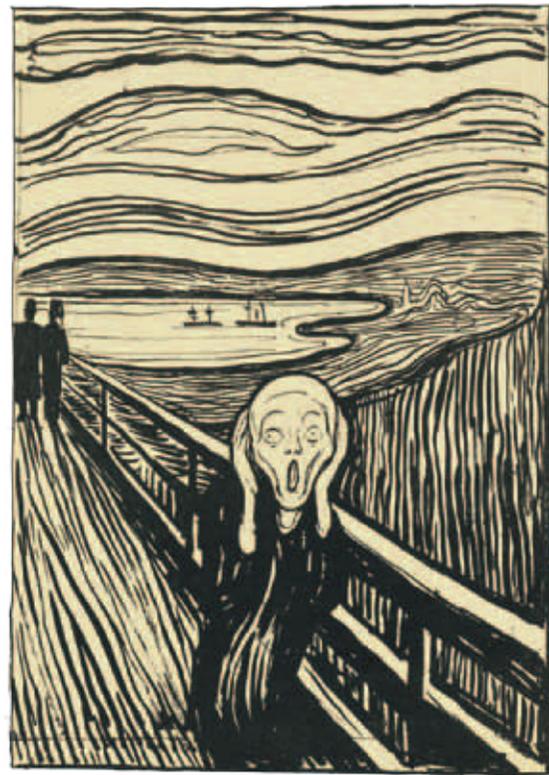
The uncertainty of life is poignantly expressed in this painting of Munch's cherished sister, Sophie, who died of tuberculosis at the age of 15. The far-away stare of the girl symbolises her acceptance of her passage into the afterlife, while the woman bows her head in sorrow, the mourning process already started. The colours Munch has used are rather morbid, yet the delicacy of the wispy line work and the ethereal quality created by the white touches give it a beauty and spirituality.

Although the brushwork is more delicate than his later work and the forms retain a sense of solidity, Munch has started to simplify his shapes and we see evidence, particularly around the hand and arm area, of his distinctive curving outlines.

Munch created many versions of this work using the media of printmaking and lithography, concentrating on the profile of the sick child, the pillow framing her face.



Despair 1892
oil on canvas
92 × 67 cm
Plate 83. Inventory no: 286
Photo: Tord Lund
Thielska Galleriet, Stockholm, Sweden



The Scream 1896
lithograph, printed in black
35.4 × 25.4 cm
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
Matthew T. Mellon Fund
Accn no. 19.1960
Digital image: © 2010, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/
Scala, Florence

These highly intense, emotional artworks draw the viewer into the space. The perspective is exaggerated, with the bridge disappearing sharply as it travels inwards. The manipulation of perspective creates a heightened sense of distress around the main figure. Rather than creating totally from his imagination, Munch based this landscape on his own experiences of the hills around the Kristiania fjord, but the resulting works were far more powerful than a mere realistic study. Munch was inspired by a dramatic sunset, the clouds suggesting blood, as if nature were screaming in terror. His bizarre use of colour was a conscious decision to paint more than could be seen, using colour and brushstrokes to express his personal feelings and emotions.

Despair is part of a haunting series of images of people on a bridge, including *Angst* and, most famous, *The Scream*, expressing the insecurities and emotional turmoil of modern urban life. Munch explores the full range of human emotions and experiences, including anxiety, fear, **foreboding** and obsession. The feelings of the figure in the foreground are clear from the title, but by the simplification of the face and inclusion of the figures behind, we interpret it as representing the universal pain of loneliness. The choice of dark, cool colours adds to the brooding mood, while the red, flame-like lines in the sky seem to press down on the figure, adding to the feeling of being pushed into the deep hole of depression.

In 1895 Munch produced a black and white lithograph of *The Scream* using the image that he first painted in tempera and pastel on board in 1893. Even without the emotional contribution of the use of colour, through the use of expressive line and direction Munch created a universal symbol of anxiety.

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY

Munch's artworks reflect his lifelong struggle with the forces of love, madness, sadness, death and destruction. He responds to his world with sensitivity and **introspection**, creating artworks with an emotional intensity unknown in the nineteenth century. His work was powerful and unique, yet he was an isolated figure, remaining an outsider in the artworld of the time. An exhibition of 50 of his paintings in Berlin in 1892 created such a public uproar that the exhibition was closed. These works so extended artistic expression and broke with conventions that they inspired the German Expressionist Movement (page 10), and they continue to influence artists today. The rawness of the emotions Munch expressed, the daring directness and inventive distortions, resulted in a unique style.

Munch's own life had been marked by sickness, madness and death. These personal experiences had a profound effect on his personality and outlook, as well as his artworks. Munch found normal human relations difficult, and it was through his art that he communicated and sought answers to life's mysteries. He attempted to go deeper than merely representing reality and achieved this by drawing on his own personal sufferings and sorrows in his work, such as the death of his sister as expressed in the painting *The Sick Child*. Simplification of forms into surfaces created by a play of curving lines became one of his main methods of creating emotional tension. Another, as we see in *Despair*, was the use of exaggerated perspective. Munch was also very aware of body language and relating the figure to the surrounding space to heighten his meaning and the emotional impact.

Although Munch created more than 1100 canvases, thousands of drawings and sketchbooks, and more than 800 different motifs in graphic (printmaking) works, it is the image of *The Scream* that, once seen, stays in people's minds. This work, whether the colour painting or the black and white lithograph, has become one of the most recognisable and famous artworks, perhaps rivalling the *Mona Lisa*.

Edvard Munch is the modern poet and philosopher in painting. At the same time, he is passionately emotional, perhaps more so than any other modern artist. The extremes of joy and pain all come to him, and human emotions are presented in his work with a naked rawness that still startles more than a century after his vision was formed.

Kynaston McShine, Chief Curator, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

STUDYING ART

- 1 What are some of the techniques that Munch used to express emotions?
- 2 How did Munch's life influence his artmaking?
- 3 What group of Modernist artists did Munch greatly influence?
- 4 Write your own storyboard (page xvii) to accompany *Despair*.

FURTHER RESEARCH

'Figures standing near curving shorelines and ever-moving sea, suggesting the insignificance of man against the magnitude of Nature, conveying a sense of isolation and melancholy' were a constant motif in his work. Find other artworks by Munch that include this imagery.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create an artwork (consider a painting, pastel drawing or print) expressing your emotional response to a personal event (such as moving house, a car accident or sickness in the family). Begin by drawing a mind map (page xiv) in your Process Diary, starting with the event and surrounding it with associated images, words, colours, emotions, the people involved and the place it occurred.
- 2 Choose one of the following themes that Munch explored in his artmaking as a starting point for a series of artworks: jealousy, grief, loneliness, anxiety, innocence, dance.

Louise HEARMAN

(b. 1963, Australian; lives and works in Melbourne)

FORM

oil painting

FRAME

Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Hearman responds to her imaginative world with strongly emotive artworks on an intimate scale that give the viewer a sense of unease.

VOCABULARY

ambiguity uncertainty, open to interpretation, with more than one possible meaning
contemporary of this time, generally in the past 10–15 years; up to date
disquiet unease, anxiety
haunting unnerving, worrying
subjective based on an individual's feelings, thoughts and imagination
surreal dreamlike, unreal, fantastic
tonal contrast light colours near dark ones (or white against black)

eBookplus

ELESSON: INTERVIEW WITH LOUISE HEARMAN

Louise Hearman offers insights into her work and inspiration. A transcript of the full interview is also available in your eBookPLUS.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES-0725



Untitled 1207 2006

oil on masonite

51 × 76 cm

Courtesy the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne

Hearman adopts a highly imaginative, **subjective** approach to her artmaking. This is a **haunting** image of a young girl, caught in murky floodwaters, who appears to be smiling. The odd harsh light illuminating the darkness, and catching the side of the girl's face, is disquieting. This is not a natural event: the flickering light seems to suggest more than just a lightning storm — perhaps flash photography or an unnatural light source. It produces a sense of foreboding — we think of the spirit world or an otherworldly setting. The dense, smeared green surface into which the girl is immersed contrasts with the thick, textured application of paint for the harsh pink dress. Layers of oil medium and gloss varnish have been used, the rich surface enticing the viewer. There is a feeling of uncertainty and mystery, created in part by the smudging of outlines, the slight lack of focus and dark lighting.

However each viewer interprets the imagery, the painting certainly sparks our imagination, making us think about possible meanings.

CRITICAL STUDY

Untitled #1058 2005
oil on masonite
49 × 48 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9
Gallery, Sydney



CRITICAL STUDY

Although some viewers find her paintings nightmarish, the artist claims this is not her intention. Her haunting landscapes often contain hints of strange figures, as in *Untitled #1058*. Here a small figure (a child?) appears to be hovering among storm clouds. The sky is beautiful yet threatening. The harsh white light outlining the figure combined with the touch of colour on her coat contrast with the mysterious landscape below. The glossy, blurred surfaces entice the viewer despite the heavy sense of gloom. There is a hint of the **surreal** as well as beauty in Hearman's use of light and texture. Illusion and reality seem to exist side by side here, as in many of her works. It is almost poetic, suggesting human suffering. We try to unravel the secrets within the painting. Hearman has said that what is important in her paintings is the wide range of possible interpretations. She wants her works to capture the viewer's imagination. She heightens the viewer's senses in a similar way to a psychological thriller movie.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Hearman has been exhibiting publicly since 1987. Her work has been described as belonging to the Romantic tradition of Goya (page 31) and Fuseli (page 8). This is because some of her paintings also show human suffering, terror and nightmarish themes, including deformed figures and severed heads.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Louise Hearman is a highly imaginative and skilled artist. She exercises a wonderful control over her chosen medium of oil paint to create mood and movement. She employs strong **tonal contrast** and surface texture, using the emotional potential of paint to its limits.

She creates images of **disquiet** and at times horror, relating her subject matter to history as well as to contemporary issues. Her works often contain tension, produced by strong tonal contrast or the placement of figures or animals within the darkness of the landscape. Her highly emotional paintings, with their dramatic lighting and atmospheric effects, suggest secrets and mysteries. She seems to be exploring her own fears or anxieties through her paintings. Her powerful imagery attracts the viewer, her luxurious but mysterious surfaces holding our attention.

Hearman demonstrates that she knows the traditional 'rules' or techniques of oil painting of the great masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Goya and Caravaggio,

yet she deliberately bends these rules. She is capable of the illusion of detailed reality yet more often creates a sense of **ambiguity**, of dramatic night landscapes. The viewer is left to imagine what is taking place, to anticipate the next event in the narrative (story). Hearman's paintings contrast luminous, shimmering colour with dark tones. The way she uses her brushstrokes both to add texture and to blur the edges of her shapes creates atmosphere and a sense of strangeness. Her paintings are generally of dusk and early evening. There is a strong personal note in her work, yet it is also a **contemporary** observation of social, political and environmental issues. The strangeness and feeling of time-warp in her works suggest the age of videos and virtual reality.

The artist's response to her environment is subjective yet her meanings are ambiguous. Louise Hearman is one of Australia's leading contemporary artists whose eerie landscapes are both unsettling and mysterious.

Art critic John McDonald refers to Hearman as a fastidious technician, a symbolist and a creator of 'sumptuous and unsettling images'. He writes: 'If her paintings are mysterious and suggestive, it is because they are fragments of narratives' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 September 1995, Spectrum, p. 19A).

... she is a natural painter who can capture the glint in someone's eye or the play of shadows on a landscape with a few deft turns of the brush... Although Hearman paints by instinct rather than intellect, the results are powerfully suggestive. All of her paintings are untitled, but look at any of them for a few minutes and one can feel a story taking shape... The drama in these paintings comes from the play of darkness and light; the mystery from Hearman's penchant for unlikely juxtapositions. It is not unusual, for instance, to find a disembodied head floating in a landscape. But the head will never be grimacing like a creature in a horror movie — the expression will be placid, even cheerful, in a distracted way. Hearman's figures are daydreamers who have left their bodies and formed some mystical union with the natural world.

Louise Hearman's images appear to be dissolving but she's painting with a very refined and highly-developed technique. It's as if the pictures are seen through the rain and the fog and the mist and through a passage of time which is related to the notion of memory.

CRITICAL PRACTICE

John McDonald,
'Daydreamers who bite back',
Sydney Morning Herald, Spectrum,
3–4 December 2005

Tony Bond, contemporary art curator at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, quoted in Stewart Hawkins, 'Leap in the dark for modern mind-field', *Telegraph Mirror*, 19 May 1995, p. 41

STUDYING ART

- 1 John McDonald and Tony Bond describe with admiration Hearman's painting technique. Find the phrases in their comments written from the *Structural Frame*.
- 2 Both critics also give their feelings about the mood of Hearman's paintings. Find the phrases that are from the *Subjective Frame*.
- 3 Find the words in each passage that suggest time as a subject or meaning in her work.
- 4 What methods has Hearman used to show us her view of the world (*Conceptual Framework*)?
- 5 The artist has said that what is important about her paintings is that they are open to a wide range of interpretations. She invites the viewer to decide on their meaning. What is your idea on what is happening in one of her paintings?
- 6 Hearman deliberately labels her works 'Untitled xx'. Why do you think she does this and could you suggest titles for these two?

Historical study

- 7 Art historians often place artists within a tradition or style of painting in order to show their significance. With what tradition has Hearman's work been compared?

ESSAY QUESTION

Use the information in this study and your own response to Louise Hearman's work and one other artist of your choice to explain how artists approach their artmaking from the *Subjective Frame*.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1 Analyse aspects of Hearman's work for any influence from the work of Leonardo da Vinci (consider his *Virgin of the Rocks*) or Goya.
- 2 Look up some photographs of the Australian photographer Bill Henson. Consider similarities with Hearman in their mood while depicting the urban environment. Use a double bubble map (page xiii) to organise your thoughts.

ARTMAKING

Create a mysterious drawing or painting in which objects or people emerge from the darkness. You might like to suggest a fear or anxiety you have personally experienced.

Irene HANENBERGH

(b. 1966, Netherlands, arrived in Australia in 1998 via Greece and the UK)

FORMS

digital prints on aluminium, zund prints

FRAMES

Postmodern in the use of technology and approach;
Subjective in the mood she creates

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Created from the artist's imaginary world, these artworks involve viewers, enticing them to use their own imagination.

VOCABULARY

tactile relating to the sense of touch
morphing changing form or shape

eBook plus

IRENE HANENBERGH ONLINE

Use the **Irene Hanenbergh** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit this artist's official website.



Truth 2005
zund print on aluminium
60 × 40 cm
Courtesy of the artist

CRITICAL STUDY

Truth hints at fantasy, myths and the supernatural. We glimpse a face emerging at the top from a source of light and what appears to be a **morphing** of fur and feathers. It suggests grotesque monster configurations yet there is also a weird sense of beauty and a **tactile** quality. Is it a dream, part of a mysterious ritual involving animals, the darker impulses of the underworld or the occult? Its strong, swirling, tumultuous movement and the sharp tonal contrasts add to the dramatic effect, enticing viewers to immerse themselves in an imaginative world.

A transformation seems to be taking place; the viewer experiences the poignancy of the moment and the sense of threat. The dazzling surface of these reflective, metallic works suggests artificiality, a technologically created virtual world of hyper-reality, yet there are also hints of something ancient and fascinating.

Hanenbergh's visually exciting, sophisticated imagery is highly original. These dramatic virtual worlds, often peopled by vampires, werewolves or fairies, are created using vector-based computer programs. She does not import or scan in images, but makes a digital file as a completely blank image, every pixel being 'painted'.

There is a dark humour as well as cynicism in Hanenbergh's work as she develops themes of romance, horror and the universal appeal of the magical, supernatural or inner vision of life. Although created using a contemporary medium and hinting at popular culture such as graffiti spray painting, her work has its roots in art history. Animals have often been employed by artists to symbolically represent human character traits, their vices as well as their virtues; at times the animals act as metaphors for the unseen artist. Hanenbergh's works relate to mythology, folk art and superstition as well as popular culture. There are suggestions of forms or figures in her works, but our imaginations have to solve the puzzle of what could be emerging from these bizarre landscapes. Her earlier works are on an intimate scale, but in 2007 she increased their size and widened her range of colours dramatically.

Hanenbergh's works are bizarre yet engaging.

Artist's statement

'I am interested in finding out why nowadays the super- and subnatural are so rapidly becoming popular in mainstream culture — the increasing use of mythological archetypes, the occult, darker supernatural phenomena and fantastical nature.'

Irene Hanenbergh studied painting and sculpture for five years in the Netherlands before being awarded a scholarship to study printmaking at the Athens School of Art. During her eight years in Athens she also completed a postgraduate program at London's Royal College of Art. She settled in Australia some ten years ago with her partner, Melbourne-based artist Tony Barifalakis.

'Feral cats, wolves' eyes, a blur of movement — you can read all manner of things into Irene Hanenbergh's feathery supernatural explosions. They are built up in ghostly wisps of turquoise but, in other works, she does treacherous planes of icy blue. Nature is everywhere, though nothing is truly natural. This is an idealized world that keeps its distance from the landscape as we know it.'

'If you had to pick one word to describe the hallucinogenic and hyper-real imagery of Irene Hanenbergh it would be this: mesmerizing. Looking at her work is like sneaking a peek through a tear in the space-time continuum. A microscopic techno-universe populated by strange beasts unfurls itself in the viewer's imagination. These inspiring works provoked the following inspired comment from panelist Ashley Crawford when reviewing Hanenbergh's work for *The Age*:

There are hints of mysticism, the supernatural, the occult, and even a strange eroticism. But then this gothic aesthetic is met with the cool, high-tech surface of digital photography applied to aluminium creating a strange schism, a kind of cyber-alchemy.

'Charlotte Hallows, writing in *Un Magazine*, sums up Hanenbergh's singular visual motifs this way:

Hanenbergh's artificial images engage with nature and diversity, technology and human utilitarianism, reason and unreason, beauty and the sublime and their inverse in monstrosity and the grotesque. This is a drama of illusion and belief.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Australian Art Collector,
issue 40,
April–June, 2007

HISTORICAL STUDY

CRITICAL PRACTICE

Megan Backhouse,
[www.artguide.com.au/
features/irene-hanenbergh](http://www.artguide.com.au/features/irene-hanenbergh)

C.L. *Australian Art Collector*,
issue 42,
January–March, 2008

The work engages the eye on the dazzling surface of the image and creatures move their weight and presence against this surface, with the threat and poignancy of an existence in a magic theatre of hyper-reality.

Mark Amery, *Dominion Post*,
27 October 2006,
<http://lumiere.net.nz/reader/item/714>

‘Irene Hanenbergh’s prints on aluminium take the airbrush-gothic of the ’70s and create powerful mystical storms out of the movement of shaggy hairdos. Working digitally, she finds magic in the machine, the work shape-shifting between Iron Maiden imagery and Nordic mythological illustration to find a true life force of its own. Like so many of these artists she manages to provide beauty, truth and irreverence all at once.’

[www.gertrude.org.au/
exchibitiin.php?id=578](http://www.gertrude.org.au/exchibitiin.php?id=578)

‘Hanenbergh’s spectral configurations of landscapes and human-animals unfurl like a dream, seemingly spawned from the dark side of our collective consciousness. For her exhibition at GCAS [Gertrude Contemporary Art Spaces, Melbourne], Hanenbergh has produced a suite of doorway-sized zund prints, her signature media, which transport the viewer through a space–time vortex that emerges onto fantastical vistas.’

Australian Art Collector,
issue 40,
April–June 2007, p. 146

‘Irene Hanenbergh is by no means an easy artist to define. Her work manages to appear both old-world and otherworldly as it straddles a realm somewhere between landscape and fantasy, the painterly and graphic illustration, old style painting and new technologies . . . That is not to say that there is anything old-fashioned about Hanenbergh. While from a distance her paintings appear rendered in a swirling morass of acrylics or oil paint, in reality they are generated on a computer and produced as zund prints on aluminium, a form of cutting-edge signage technology.

There are contradictions aplenty in these works. Her studio resembles that of a more traditional artist. Along with masses of laser prints of works in progress, there are papers and pencils everywhere, sketches, more traditional finished drawings — the usual detritus of a painter’s studio. One would barely notice the clapped-out looking computer that is central to this practice, a tobacco-stained ancient PC that barely looks like it would have the energy to save a Word document. But appearances can deceive; Hanenbergh is an artist who has truly embraced technology; she has rebuilt the inside of this innocuous hunk of plastic into a machine that can let her paint and draw with a staggering array of paintbrushes and pencils and in every colour of the spectrum. Forget the slickness of a new G5 Apple Mac — the ratty, almost homely appearance of her PC, is, she says, “almost like an old paint-brush. I feel comfortable with it.”

‘Equally telling may be the stack of books on the table, ranging from a huge tome on Caspar David Friedrich (she readily admits to her fondness for the nineteenth-century Romantic painter, but says: “he’s a bit too neat, which is probably the part I don’t like”) through to books on magic and superstition and a well-thumbed catalogue for a Tony Clark survey show.’

STUDYING ART

- 1 An art critic will offer their own opinion while they judge and explain an artist’s work.
 - (a) Find instances above of a critic giving an opinion of Hanenbergh’s work.
 - (b) Give instances where a critic has given you an insight that helps you understand Hanenbergh’s work.
 - (c) What influences on her artmaking have been suggested?
- 2 Briefly explain Hanenbergh’s artmaking methods.
- 3 Refer to examples of her work to explain how Hanenbergh’s work belongs to the *Subjective Frame*.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create an artwork containing imagery and possibly text referring to the ‘dark side’ of contemporary culture as expressed in films, songs, virtual reality and dress (e.g. emo culture, gothic, punk, supernatural fantasy, Japanese anime characters).
- 2 Create an artwork that includes animals in a subjective approach. You might like to consider cruelty to animals in circuses or scientific experimentation (research the work of Australian artist Lisa Roet). On completion do a group evaluation of your work (page xi).

STRUCTURAL FRAME

Artists who work from the *Structural Frame* place primary importance on the visual language they use rather than on the subject, their emotional expression or the communication or challenging of an idea or issue. Artists may develop their own system of signs, symbols and codes relating to such art elements as line, shape, colour, tone and texture. The brushstrokes, the way the paint is applied or the artwork constructed, take precedence. Artists concentrate on the formal organisation and the visual qualities of artworks to convey meaning.

Although many *Structural Frame* artists are abstract artists, they can also work within a subject or theme; it is their methods that carry the strength of the meaning or visual impact.

Symbols and signs are part of the visual language of the *Structural Frame*. How signs and symbols function depends on conventions, traditions and the intention of the artist. A symbol can be defined as something that stands for, represents or denotes something else. Symbols in art function at many different levels according to the values, beliefs and social customs of the artist and the audience. Symbols and conventions may have a specific single meaning or may be interpreted on a wider, more general level.

LIST OF ARTISTS

Rover Thomas p. 20
 Peter D. Cole p. 23
 Peter Sharp p. 25
 Jasper Knight p. 27

eBook *plus*

INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2187



Peter Sharp
Albatross 2005
 oil and acrylic on linen
 182 × 210 cm
 From the exhibition *Sounding*,
 Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney

Rover THOMAS

[1926–98, Australian]

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Structural, Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Thomas created paintings of landscapes that documented an event. The works also have the power and mystery of the creative past and support the belief that art helps to keep Aboriginal culture strong.

VOCABULARY

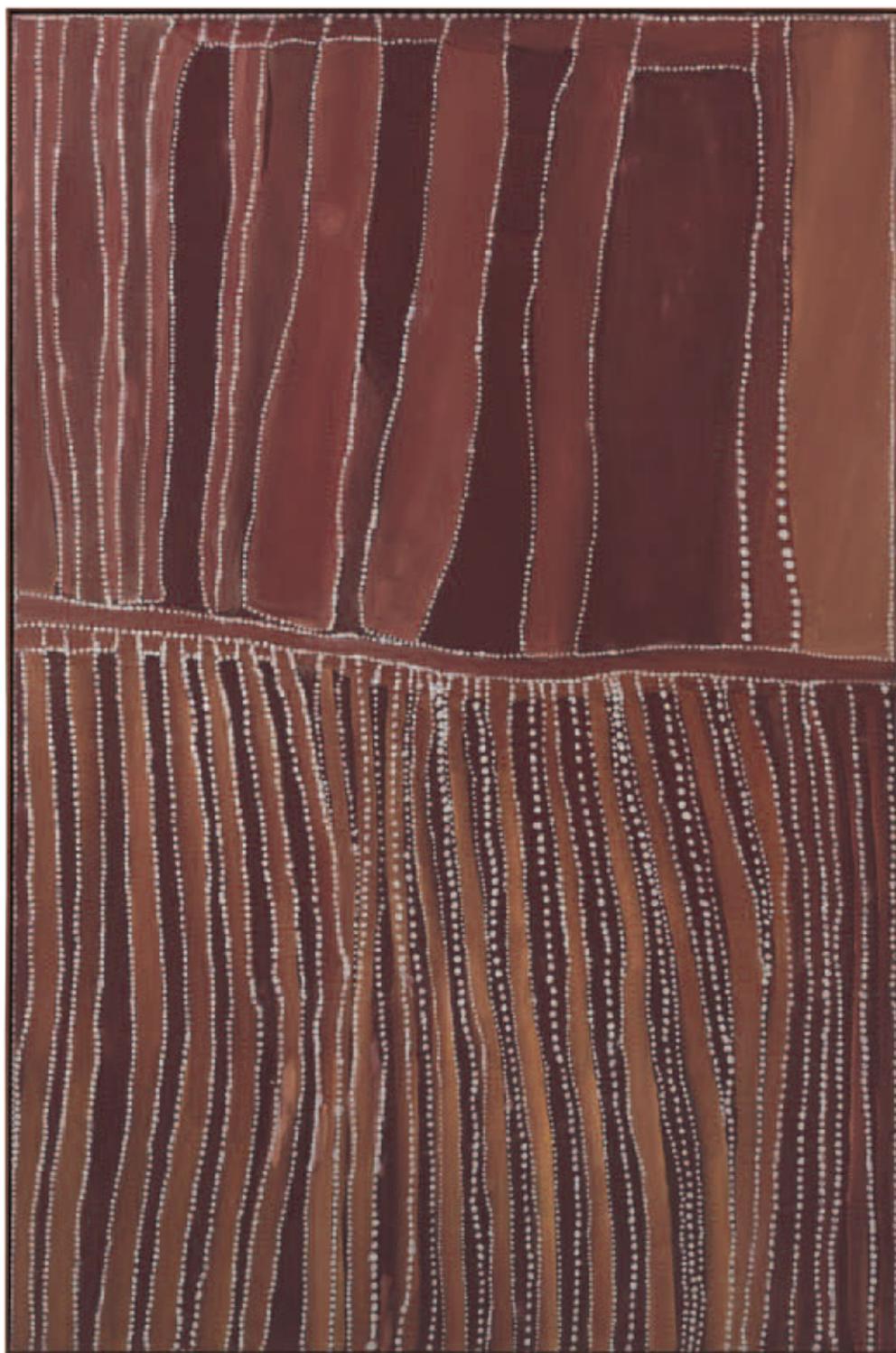
convention an accepted way, rule or standard, an agreed system

ochre soft, crumbly stone, generally yellow or red-brown

eBookplus

ROVER THOMAS BIOGRAPHY

Use the **Rover Thomas** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and works of this artist.



[this page]

All That Big Rain Coming from Top Side 1991

natural pigments and gum on canvas

180.0 × 120.0 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 2001

Reproduced courtesy of Warmun Art Centre

[opposite]

Cyclone Tracy 1991

natural pigments on canvas

168.0 × 180.0 cm

National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Purchased 1991

Reproduced courtesy of Warmun Art Centre

All That Big Rain Coming from Top Side (opposite) is roughly divided in half by a thin horizontal line, the larger, vertical sections on top seeming to be heavier, pushing down on the narrow bands of colour below. Different tones of brown have been used, the white rows of dots, suggestive of raindrops, accenting the edges of the lines. This painting is very structural and linear. The soft curve of the lines provides a sense of movement and interest. Although we can appreciate it as an abstract artwork, for the artist it is culturally significant to Thomas, representing a particular place and a personal memory. Thomas has used lines and shapes to symbolise different aspects of nature. The upper half depicts six channels of water flowing to a cliff's edge, and the bottom half is the water running down the waterfall. It actually represents a waterfall near Texas Downs Station in the Kimberley. Thomas worked on this station and often visited the waterfall. It is also a reminder that some young Aboriginals were killed here when lightning struck, collapsing the roof of a cave in which they were sheltering.

The black shape of the cyclone dominates the canvas in *Cyclone Tracy* (below). It seems to be forcing the surrounding shapes to bend under its pressure. The viewer is reminded of shock waves or wind pressure bars. The colours are the traditional **ochres** of East Kimberley rock art. Shapes are outlined or defined by neat lines of white dots, a **convention** found in desert art. Flat areas of colour relate to the



sparse planes of Rover Thomas's own desert country. The viewer needs to see the artwork itself to appreciate the bold brushstrokes and the variation between thin washes and the built-upon areas of textured ochre. Some surfaces are matt while others are slightly glossy. It is a painting of spiritual importance that also depicts (represents) a historical event.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Rover Thomas, an Indigenous artist, was born on one of Australia's most famous cattle tracks, the Canning Stock Route in the Great Sandy Desert. As European farming and grazing spread further into Aboriginal land, his family moved to the East Kimberley in the north of Western Australia, where Thomas spent most of his life working as a stockman and fencer. He began painting on a regular basis in 1981.

When Cyclone Tracy hit Darwin on Christmas Day 1974, Aboriginal elders in the Kimberley attributed it to the Rainbow Serpent. They took the destruction to Europeans caused by the cyclone as a warning to Aboriginal people to keep their culture strong.

During the storms that accompanied Cyclone Tracy, a relative of Rover Thomas's was critically injured in a car crash on a flooded road. She was flown by the Royal Flying Doctor Service to Perth. It is said that she died as the plane flew over a whirlpool, the site in the west known as the home of the Rainbow Serpent, Juntarkal. Rover Thomas received the spirit of this woman and established his ceremonial links to this country through his ownership of the Krill Krill ceremony. A series of songs were revealed to him in a dream and became the basis for the funeral ceremony to assist the deceased relative's spirit to return home. As the owner of the images for this ceremony, he at first instructed other painters, notably his uncle Paddy Jaminji, in the execution of the designs. The designs were painted on boards that dancers carried across their shoulders. Thomas gradually began painting the boards himself and developed more complex compositions, separate from the ceremony, on canvas. Initially he painted on discarded plywood using natural ochres, clays and charcoal mixed with bush resin. Later he used PVA as a binder and some commercial pigments as well as ochres.

Rover Thomas is unique among Aboriginal desert artists in the way he makes reference to recent events. His innovative approach reminds us that Aboriginal culture is contemporary and receptive to change.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Write your own description or interpretation of the painting *Cyclone Tracy*.
- 2 How is Rover Thomas's representation of the cyclone different from a photograph that might have appeared in a newspaper at the time? (Ask older family members if they remember the event.)
- 3 The landscape that Rover Thomas paints is well known to him from his travels as a stockman. How does he represent this land as open and sparse?

Historical study

- 4 What aspects of Rover Thomas's art link it to traditional Aboriginal art, and what is new or different?

ARTMAKING

Choose another natural disaster, such as a flood, fire, hailstorm, drought or volcanic eruption. Create an artwork using only black, white and two other colours to represent this event.

FORM

sculpture

FRAME

Structural in his use of symbols to communicate meaning

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Cole responds to his own experiences of the world, particularly the rural Australian landscape.

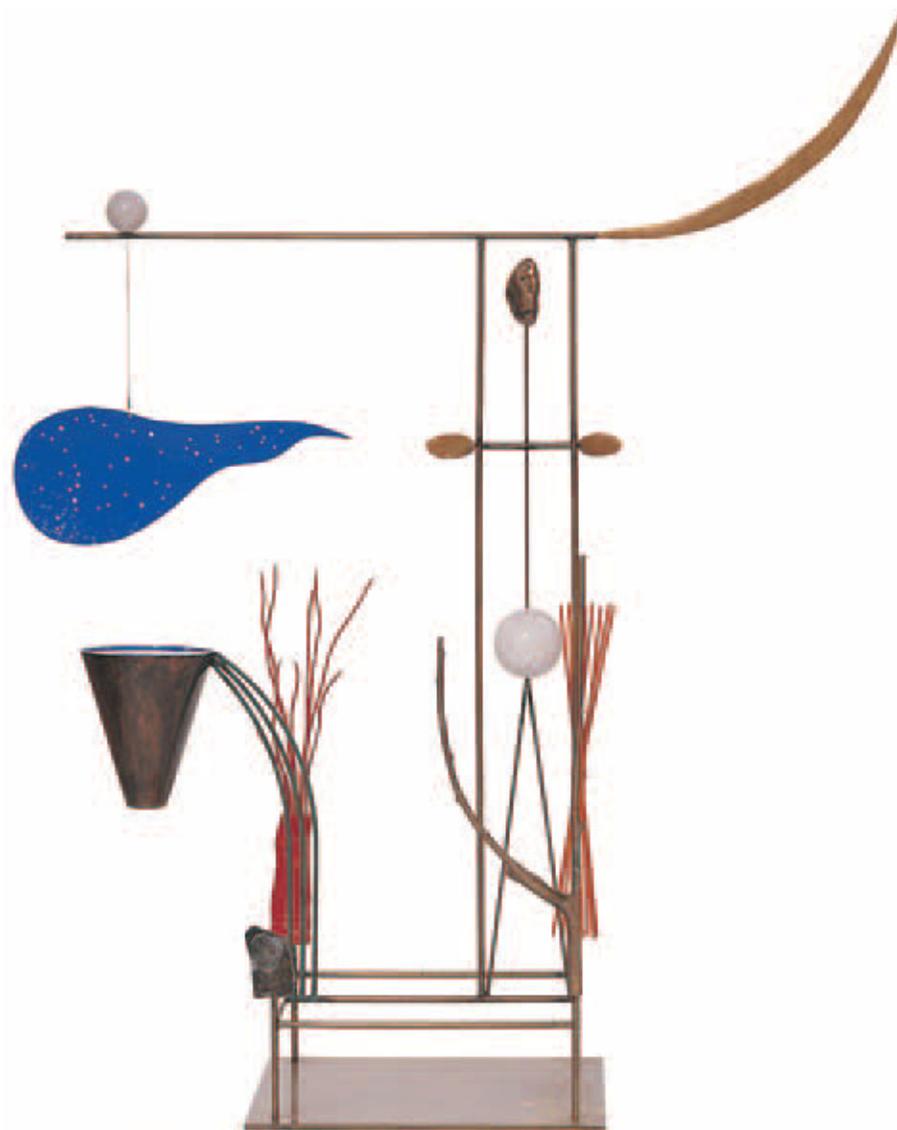
VOCABULARY

assembling creating an assemblage, an artwork that combines a range of objects
intuitively working from feelings and hunches rather than reason or knowledge
motif a recurring idea, image or shape
whimsical imaginatively comical, unpredictable

eBookplus

PETER D. COLE

Use the **Peter D. Cole** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a portfolio of works by this artist.



Landscape Cycle — Water 1994
 bronze, brass and aluminium, painted and patinated
 99 × 84 × 33 cm
 Courtesy of Australian Galleries
 © Peter Cole, 1999
 Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In *Landscape Cycle — Water*, Peter Cole uses a wonderful combination of materials, colours and symbols to suggest a narrative (story). The shapes of twigs are obvious; it takes a little longer to find the man. The blue shape symbolises water hovering over a bucket, yet it also suggests stars in the sky and the shape of a tadpole. There is a feeling of loss of gravity, weightlessness. The blue shape seems to float in space. The top right-hand shape is tilted upwards as if it has just moved.

The mood is of fun and fantasy. It is the space between his lines and shapes that creates the tension and interest. All of these shapes are interrelated, while

CRITICAL STUDY

at the same time they remain separate and almost aloof (at a distance). Cole has created an amazing play on balance and order. The ball, balancing precariously, appears ready to drop into the container below to begin a chain of events. The bright primary colours compete with the dull sheen of the bronze. We associate the blue and red with the human-made and the modern era, the bronze with the natural and the ancient.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Cole breaks down the landscape into a language of symbols. He has developed a complex system of imagery that always suggests a sense of place — the Australian terrain.

Many of the **motifs** in Cole's works relate to his own property, including the hills, pear trees and twisted gum trees and the Campaspe River that borders the property. A bronze pear appears in many of his works. The pear is used as a symbol of human nourishment and, through its curvaceous shape, of sexuality and the female form. Other obvious symbols in his works are the book, representing experience, thinking and a search for knowledge; the light bulb, symbolising human thought or ideas; and the window, a way of looking on the world.

Cole works with steel, bronze and colour, responding to the landscape by developing his own motifs or symbols. He uses blue to symbolise water and sky, yellow for the sun and red for the earth and fire.

The subject matter remains clear despite the simplification into symbols of the elements of earth, sun and sky. But the land he shows is not chaotic; rather, it is characterised by playful, energetic rhythm and **whimsical** order.

Cole's sculptures are finely crafted, with clean edges, precision and care. There is evidence of careful selection and awareness of unity. His shapes are carefully arranged to create meaning and balance. The use of primary colours (red, yellow and blue) in his work conveys an energy and sense of movement, reminding us of a carnival.

CRITICAL PRACTICE

David Cross, *Peter D. Cole: Sculpture and Works on Paper 1992–94*, Australian Galleries catalogue, Sydney, 1992, p. 6

'The process of selection, experimentation and construction is central to most object art, yet for Cole it has a special significance. Much of the meaning of his sculpture comes from the process of **assembling** . . . Working **intuitively**, both chance and reason inform the final placement of the components in his search for the fantastic . . . [T]he works have a toy-like quality — ready and willing to be activated by the child in all of us. The desire to touch . . . is partly encouraged by the deliberate inclusion of moving parts.'

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Structural Frame

- 1 List or draw some of the symbols used by Cole and write down what they represent.
- 2 How is movement suggested in his work?
- 3 How does Cole's choice of materials suggest meaning?
- 4 Find one sentence in the 'Critical study' section that is a personal evaluation or opinion.
- 5 Can you find an instance where the writer of the 'Critical study' section has offered an interpretation of the sculpture (tried to suggest meaning)?

ARTMAKING

Create your own symbols for elements of nature and incorporate these into a sculptural piece. You could use coloured cardboard, glued or threaded through bamboo skewers and stuck into a support (maybe plasticine). If you want to use curved lines you may need to use stiff wire.

Peter SHARP

(b. Sydney, 1964, Australian)

FORMS

painting,
printmaking

FRAME

Structural — Sharp has developed his own visual language that relies heavily on symbolism, abstract shapes and space to convey his interpretation of the landscape.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Sharp relates to the landscape in abstract terms.

eBookplus

PETER SHARP ONLINE

Use the **Peter Sharp** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.

The title suggests that *Whale 3* is related to sea life. What we actually experience is not a realistic image of a whale (although the underlying dark blue shape has some vague similarities to one), but the idea of being immersed in an underwater world, the suggestion of floating objects of seaweed and microscopic organisms, and their interrelatedness. There is a sense of life and movement, the bubbles of sea foam or a marine organism, the transparency as one shape passes over another. Ultimately what is intriguing to the viewer is the power of his shapes, the subtle layering of surfaces, the delicacy of the lines and the intuitive balance of the way the shapes have been arranged in the space of the canvas. The viewer is drawn into and around the work as if within the fathomless depths of the sea.

In the exhibition catalogue, Prue Gibson explains how Sharp's discovery of a beached whale carcass in Western Australia inspired this body of work.

Unlike any other creature, whales arouse a yearning in humans. They are like sirens, calling us to the deep blue, coaxing us towards a better and more spiritual place. It is the mass, surface, blubber and beauty of whales that attract and inspire Peter Sharp . . .

CRITICAL STUDY

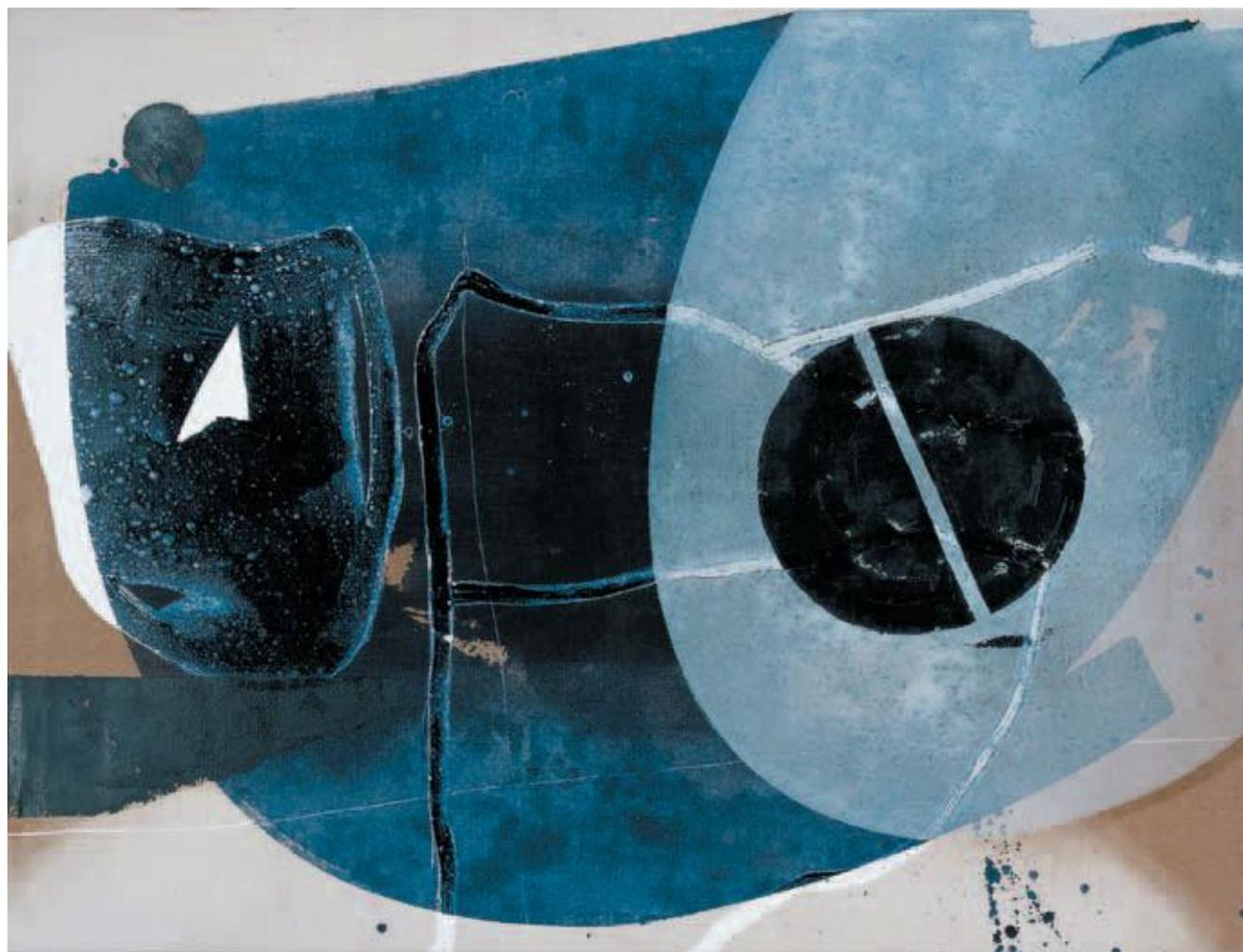
Whale 3 2005

oil and acrylic on linen

150 × 200 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Liverpool Street Gallery

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



ARTIST'S PRACTICE



Albatross 2005
oil and acrylic on linen
182 × 210 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Liverpool Street Gallery

Peter Sharp in his studio, 2008
Courtesy of the artist and Liverpool
Street Gallery



Peter Sharp's artworks are about place, in particular the beach landscape as experienced by someone who grew up surfing at Kurnell, Sydney. His main interest is the notion of space and being immersed in the landscape. In this he has tried to break away from the Western or Eurocentric view of landscape, visiting the desert areas of Australia and admiring Indigenous artists' approach to depicting their land. During his outback trips he was much affected both by the vastness of the sky and by the way Aboriginal artists worked spontaneously, seemingly immersed in their land and art. Sharp began to simplify his paintings, to represent not a scene but water itself, being immersed in water and surrounded by it. He works mainly with blue and black backgrounds, building up the surfaces and minimalist shapes on his large-scale works. Greys and warm beiges offset the dark tones.

'For me,' he says, 'it's about moving the paint around on the surface and you can really see this on my big canvases. They're about textures and colour and being surrounded.'

COFA, issue 19, 2007

Sharp works on his paintings on the floor, starting first with acrylic paint, then applying layers of oil glaze, creating a sense of staining, bleeding and movement like sea foam over the sand.

Sharp's paintings exhibit a love of nature, a respect that informs his mark making and symbols, the delicate line work and tender working of the surface. We do not observe the land or sea in Sharp's artworks; we are enveloped by it. He is an intuitive artist who has developed his own symbolic language using the visual properties of rich texture, line, simple shapes and tonal contrast to convey a complexity of meanings despite the minimalism of his imagery.

Sharp also works in the medium of charcoal on paper, reworking his themes with subtlety and sureness of touch. Similarly, he produces variations in timber, prints and mixed media.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Write a critical review of *Albatross*, concentrating on the *Structural Frame*.
- 2 Peter Sharp has been influenced by the philosophy of Aboriginal artists towards nature. What similarities can you see in the work of Peter Sharp and Rover Thomas?
- 3 Jasper Knight (opposite) and Peter Sharp interpret their immediate worlds in their *Structural Frame* artworks. What differences are evident in the techniques they employ, their approach to subject and their application of paint?

ARTMAKING

Create an abstract artwork related to a particular aspect of nature. You might consider the shape of shadows, cross-sections or molecular microcosms. Concentrate on creating different textural surfaces and a balance between large shapes and small detail.

FORM

painting

FRAME

Structural in the prominence of the materials, composition and technique

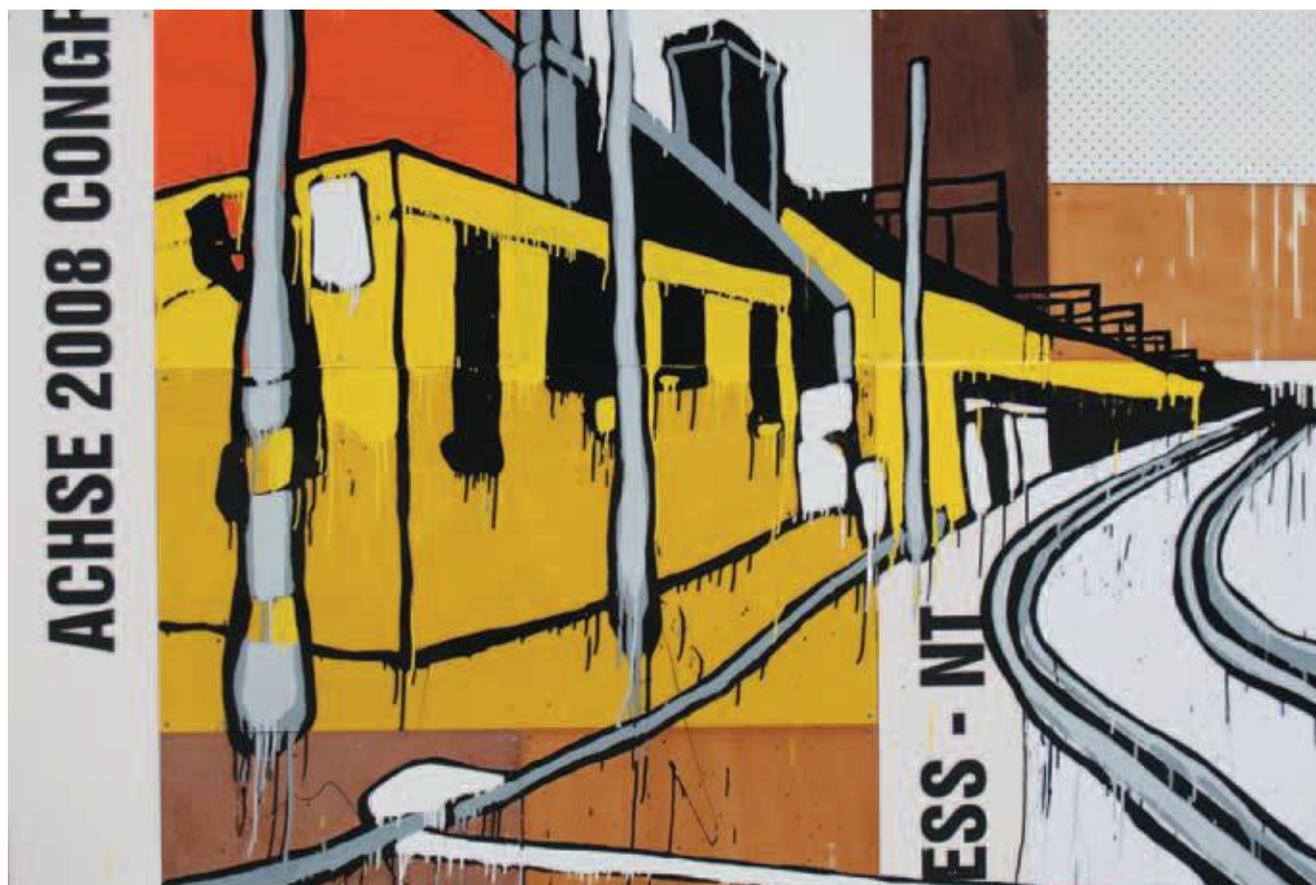
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Knight comments on the urban world. The audience responds directly to the boldness of his colours and shapes.

eBookplus

JASPER KNIGHT ONLINE

Use the **Jasper Knight** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.



Central Station 2008

225 × 150 cm

enamel, masonite, plywood, perspex and copper on board

© Jasper Knight

Using minimal imagery, Knight manages to communicate while exploring an exciting simplification of form, different textural surfaces, and the contrast between the commercially produced and the artist's own intervention. Although there are strong perspective lines in *Central Station*, with the rail track curving into the distance, the overall effect is of a flat surface that has been cleverly broken up and manipulated. The subject of a railway station is a departure point for the artist, allowing him to experiment with surface, carefully balancing the different textures, layers and line work. The structure and individual approach or technique used is obviously a focus, but we are also aware that this is a desolate urban area in need of repair. It is not a pristine, realistic viewpoint of a modern commercial property. This work continues his distinctive use of black, white and grey.

CRITICAL STUDY

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Jasper Knight's main theme is the urban environment, in particular industrial docklands. It is the discarded or decaying that appeals to Knight. His imagery includes old cranes and earthmoving equipment, smashed car bodies, rusting iron and wooden structures such as old piers, ferry landings and derelict buildings. His painting technique, with its drips of paint, wobbly outlines and simplified shapes, reinforces the sense of neglect and disuse. Jasper Knight's paintings record the present and remind us of how our urban areas undergo change.

People rarely appear in these artworks, which generally feature areas of abandonment, places in need of redevelopment. In his interpretations of the docklands of Melbourne, the piers and ferries of Sydney, the railway station, scenes of London or a car factory in France, he concentrates on the architecture, vehicles and signs rather than human interaction. Although at times his works include specific, identifiable features, they tend to be universal images that are relevant to any industrialised city. When Knight does include a figure in his composition, it tends to be an anonymous shadow or cut-out. (He has nonetheless been a finalist with his portraits in the Archibald Prize for several years.)

Richard Gill 2005

150 × 150 cm

enamel, masonite, plywood, perspex and copper on board

© Jasper Knight



The boldness of Knight's use of colour takes these works away from the sentimental. The primary colours lead us to appreciate his paintings for their structural qualities, the visual interest of the shapes and the artist's skill in creating dynamic compositions. Although at first they seem simple with their flat, basic forms and restricted colour palette, we come to appreciate the balance between the flat paint and the thick, expressive dribbles, which reminds us of the work of the Abstract Expressionists. In some works Knight also makes reference to the artworks of Roy Lichtenstein (pages 33, 215), with their dot areas to add tonal variety and a sense of patterns hinting at advertising and commercialism. Underlying meanings concerning the consumer-driven planned obsolescence of our contemporary society can also be identified.

Knight's artworks involve paint with the addition of constructed objects hand-crafted from perspex, plywood, recycled cardboard, old signs and discarded objects. We can detect links in technique and subject matter with the Pop artists Lichtenstein, Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg. Knight builds up the surface by glueing these objects and materials onto a baseboard. Then this sculptural background is painted with shiny, fluid commercial enamel paint applied with quick bold strokes, with areas allowed to dribble across the various splits in the surface and textural areas. A tension is built up between the different areas of commercial products and the obvious brushstrokes and dribbles from the artist's hand. His choice of materials reflects his subject matter.

Artist's statements

'The surfaces and materials have their own history, of trade, industrial sites and the local hardware. These histories often bear a direct relationship to the content of the work. For example, my series based on ports was constructed, in part, from the detritus of the ports.'

www.metro5gallery.com.au/artistknight.htm

'To read my works, the viewer is asked to respond to different rhythms set up in the work. Colour is a major element and is used to link and confuse the various surfaces. The approach to panelling in the surface creates its own connections among the parts of the painting. Sometimes a sign is left unpainted or perhaps a totally abstract panel is tacked on, without any connection to the figurative drawing. The arrangement of the panels is another level on which my paintings seek to balance elements, removed from the realistic content. So to understand the work the viewer should oscillate between the abstract and the figurative, the constructed object and the painterly surface and the use of colour to describe and erase.'

www.metro5gallery.com.au/artist?a=Jasperknight

STUDYING ART

Structural Frame

- 1 Jasper Knight uses dotted areas in his work. How does this add to the visual interest of his work, and which other artist has used stencilled dot areas in his painting?
- 2 Write a critical analysis of Jasper Knight's work *Richard Gill*, concentrating on the *Structural Frame* (technique, symbols, materials, composition).
- 3 It has been said that Knight works in 'a linear and architectural way'. What does this mean to you as you look at his works?

SHORT ESSAY QUESTION

Artists who work mainly from the *Structural Frame* develop their own visual language of signs, symbols, line and colour. Explain how this applies to the work of Jasper Knight. Use a single bubble map (page xvii) to identify and summarise the main features of his work.

ESSAY QUESTION

Conceptual Framework — Structural Frame

How is Jasper Knight's work an individual development of the collage work of Kurt Schwitters (page 191) with relevance to today's society?

CHAPTER 3

CULTURAL FRAME

LIST OF ARTISTS

War and violence

Francisco de Goya p. 31
Pablo Picasso p. 32
Roy Lichtenstein p. 33
George Gittoes p. 34

Cultural identity — gender, race, beliefs

Shirin Neshat p. 37
Ginger Riley Munduwalawala p. 41
Sangeeta Sandrasegar p. 44
Ah Xian p. 46

Poverty, family values

Dorothea Lange p. 48

eBook *plus*

INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2188

Artworks created from the *Cultural Frame* reflect the artists' responses to or involvement within their society or culture. They are associated with identity. *Cultural Frame* artworks may express artists' spiritual or political beliefs or social values. Artists may seek to develop layers of meaning relating to significant events (political, historical or environmental), or racial or gender issues. Meaning is understood according to the social perspective of the audience. Some *Cultural Frame* artworks act as a social record or to inform, while others seek to confront the audience in an effort to change opinion — particularly on social injustice, violence and war. Choice of imagery and symbols is important in conveying meaning within the *Cultural Frame*.

After looking at the artworks in this chapter, create a cluster map on the *Cultural Frame* as a summary of key factors and issues.



Ginger Riley Munduwalawala
Ngak Ngak and the Four Archers 1993
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
171.0 × 288.7 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

FORM
painting

FRAMES
*Subjective,
Cultural*

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
Goya interprets events in his world in an artwork that draws an emotional reaction from the audience.

eBookplus

FRANCISCO DE GOYA: WORKS

Use the **Goya** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a gallery of works by this artist.

This painting has become a symbol of man's inhumanity to man. Goya does not show the faces of the executioners — they are acting on orders — while the condemned reveal their terror or anguish in the face of death. Note the stance of the well-lit central figure, his arms held high in surrender or, more probably, defiance: he is willing to die for his beliefs. Goya's chosen viewpoint, the diagonal direction of the figures and the strong shadows, adds a sense of drama. The close focus, particularly on the dead figure at left front, engages the audience in an intimately shocking way. We are made aware of the helplessness of the people's uprising, the horror of tyranny and oppression. For six years the citizens of Spain, led by well-organised guerrilla fighters and a fierce popular resistance, waged a bloody war against their French occupiers.

CRITICAL STUDY

Execution of the Defenders of Madrid, 3rd May, 1808 1814

oil on canvas
268 × 127 cm
Museo del Prado, Madrid/
The Bridgeman Art Library



STUDYING ART

- 1 With the *Cultural Frame* it is important to understand the shared social, political, moral and religious ideas of the time and place in which the artist worked. How does the historical and cultural knowledge given above help you interpret this artwork?
- 2 What issues or aspects of war are communicated in this painting?

ESSAY QUESTION

Cultural Frame

How does this artwork by Goya and those by Lichtenstein (pages 33, 215) reflect issues of race, gender, politics and class?

FORMS

mural, oil painting

FRAMES

Subjective, Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This large painting (nearly eight metres long) has a great emotional impact on the audience, challenging them to question their views on war and violence in their own world as well as in the past.

eBookplus

PABLO PICASSO

Use the **Picasso** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and art of this artist.

CRITICAL STUDY

Picasso's *Guernica* has become an icon of human suffering. Not only is it symbolic of the evils of war, but it represents violence and the powerful emotions of grief and rage in a dramatic, graphic manner. Hands are outstretched in pain, people fall from buildings on fire, faces scream, babies lie dead over distraught mothers' laps. Horses, long-suffering beasts of burden who were often the first to fall in war, share in the suffering and voice their protest.

This painting is Picasso's interpretation of the infamous raid on the Spanish town of Guernica in April 1937 by German and Fascist Italian aircraft during the Spanish Civil War. It marked perhaps the first use of terror bombing against a civilian population in Europe. The massacre was all the more horrifying as most able-bodied men were away fighting so the victims were mainly women, children and the elderly.

eBookplus

PICASSO HEAD

Use the **Picasso Head** weblink in your eBookPLUS to create your own Picasso-style portrait online.



Guernica 1937

oil on canvas

349.3 × 776 cm

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Spain/The Bridgeman Art Library

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

STUDYING ART

- 1 Why do you think Picasso has included a bull in this painting?
- 2 Analyse the power of the symbols used by Picasso. What meanings can you suggest for each symbol? (*Hint*: Look for the following: broken dagger, electric bulb, flower, bull, horse.)
- 3 Why do you think Picasso chose to use mainly black, white and shades of grey (some tinged with blue, green and brown)?
- 4 Is this painting a universal symbol of violence rather than a historical record of one day during a war in Spain? How does it question authority and morality in our contemporary world?

Roy LICHTENSTEIN

[1923–1997, American]

FORM
painting

FRAME
Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Lichtenstein represents his world through everyday subjects from popular culture. His art reflects the changing times, and particularly the growth of consumerism, mass production and advertising.

eBookplus

LICHTENSTEIN: WORKS

Use the **Lichtenstein** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and art of this artist.

See more of Lichtenstein's art on pages 215–17.

Despite its comic strip format, and thus the simplified, childish fantasy element, *Whaam!* is still a painting about war. The bold, graphic energy of a mass medium is harnessed in these two large canvases placed side by side to create a sequential narrative (a story of a series of events). The angle of the plane and the stylised red and yellow flames heighten the drama, and we almost hear the explosion.

By closely cropping the image, Lichtenstein makes us feel part of the action and helps us identify with the pilot and his thoughts (given in the speech bubble). The sharply outlined shapes add to the sense of violence.

But there is also a touch of humour here: the two paintings are connected so that one panel is 'shooting' the other. We identify with the pilot's exaltation and the exclamation 'Whaam!'

CRITICAL STUDY

Whaam! 1963
acrylic and oil on canvas
172 × 269 cm
© Tate, London, 2006, and
Roy Lichtenstein
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



Lichtenstein made several war paintings during 1962–63, including *Takka Takka* 1962 and the three-part painting *As I Opened Fire*. In this series he deliberately chose emotional subjects, combining them with his controlled, deliberate painting technique, which tended to negate at first glance the social comment of his works. In this way he reflects his source material, comics which generally consist of highly charged, subject matter carried out using standard, obvious and personally removed techniques.

Lichtenstein wrote:

A minor purpose of my war paintings is to put military aggressiveness in an absurd light. My personal opinion is that much of our foreign policy has been unbelievably terrifying, but this is not what my work is about and I don't want to capitalize on this popular position. My work is more about our American definition of images and visual communication.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

ESSAY QUESTION

How do the artists Goya, Picasso and Lichtenstein represent war?

FORM

painting

FRAME

Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Gittoes sees his art as a tool for bringing about social change, a political weapon against the barbaric acts that people inflict upon one another, particularly in war zones. His work comes from his own direct, emotional experiences.

VOCABULARY

dismembered separated body parts, limbs cut off
grotesque bizarre, unnaturally ugly or horrifying
pacifist someone who rejects the use of war or violence as a means to resolve conflict

eBookPLUS

GEORGE GITTOES: WORKS

Use the **George Gittoes** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this artist.

CRITICAL STUDY

Rwanda Maconde is not merely the record of a witness to history but an expression of the direct experiences of a **pacifist**. Gittoes painted this work in order to shock the viewer into doing something positive against the violence and evils of society. As an Australian, Gittoes is often able to walk into a foreign war zone and be accepted as a neutral observer. He has witnessed soldiers struggling with their guilt in the aftermath of massacres.

Gittoes uses bold central images and recognised symbols to ensure that a wide audience can easily understand his message. Distortions, thick expressive brushwork and glaring colours vie for our attention and work on our senses. We cannot help but respond emotionally to Gittoes' artwork. His images contain elements of the **grotesque**, as in the infant staring at us, his hands having been cut off with a machete. Huge heads, enormous eyes and **dismembered** bodies often feature in his paintings, these distortions of scale being used to overwhelm the viewer and force home his social statement.

Artist's statements

'I see my work as being about COMPASSION', Gittoes writes in a letter, 'and feel all of it can be described in that word. I care about the people where I go and try to help them physically as well as telling their stories in words and pictures. I am aware of all the darkness that surrounds my work and comes from within me as well, but compassion is the candle.'

Quoted in Gavin Fry, *George Gittoes*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1998, pp. 6–7

'What I have recognised is that social realism is as inadequate as photography. I have looked at the possibilities of the other 20th century isms — cubism, surrealism, conceptualism, expressionism and abstraction, and taken something from all of them. The humanist influence of previous centuries — Gericault, Goya, Rembrandt, Velasquez, El Greco and Caravaggio — has helped to keep my focus on that essential question for artists "what is it to be human?"'

Quoted on the website of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, www.icbl.org/smsp/gittoes/artiststatement.php3





Crossroads 2005–07
oil on canvas
198 × 310 cm
Private collection
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

Less aggressive and confronting than some of his earlier work such as *Rwanda Maconde*, *Crossroads* nevertheless hints at the aftermath of terror. There is still the figurative aspect and the use of symbols but the imagery is more fragmented, suggesting a more reflective approach rather than a direct record of events.

Gittoes has ventured into many battle situations, accompanying Australian peacekeeping forces in the Sahara, Algeria, the Sinai, Palestine and southern Lebanon. He has also recorded his experiences of atrocities in Rwanda, Mozambique, South Africa, Northern Ireland, East Timor and Bosnia. His series on heavy industry in Australia focused on steelworkers, exploited miners and Aboriginal people in outback communities. He has worked with artists of many nationalities. In 1999, Gittoes was involved with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, travelling to Cambodia, the Thai–Burma and Thai–Cambodia borders, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Gittoes has often shared the life of soldiers, carrying his own supplies on long marches. He has had to limit his art equipment to drawing paper, a 6B pencil and a diary to record essential information so he can develop the images and responses later in etchings and paintings. Gittoes currently works in a number of interrelated media — photography, drawing and printmaking. He has also created film and performance works. His films *Rampage* and *Soundtrack to War* (the latter incorporated in Michael Moore's Academy Award-winning *Fahrenheit 911*) have become cult films, shown at festivals and arthouse cinemas and released on DVD. He recently spent time in Peshawar, recording in the resulting film, *The Miscreants*, the cultural conflict in Pakistan between the stern traditions and directives of the Taliban and the joyous poetry of the Sufis and the generous mystical tradition of Islam. In the film's opening scene a falcon

CRITICAL STUDY

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

(opposite)
Rwanda Maconde 1997
oil on canvas
305 × 172 cm
© George Gittoes, 1997
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

soars from a minaret into a beautiful clear blue sky, but it is soon enveloped in choking smoke swirling up from below, where the Taliban are burning stacks of proscribed DVDs and CDs as a statement of their social control.

Gittoes' work provides an artist's vision of cultures in conflict, often during or after civil war. His main themes are horror, pain, cruelty, loss, courage, and the strength of the human spirit and the spiritual. It is his investigation of the beauty of courage in the midst of despair that makes his works so poignant and memorable. Gittoes has said that, by facing reality, he sees 'the other face of the otherness — the other reality of the soul'. He has twice won the Blake Prize for Religious Art.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Cultural Frame

- 1 What does the painting *Rwanda Maconde* mean to you, and what is your opinion of it?
- 2 Explain how Gittoes uses colour and brushstrokes in his figures.

Cultural Frame

- 3 What cultural symbols and imagery of war can you see in *Crossroads* and *Rwanda Maconde*?
- 4 On what aspects of society does Gittoes comment in his artmaking?
- 5 What is the purpose of Gittoes' art?

Historical study

- 6 What do you learn about Gittoes as a man from the first artist's statement? What do you learn about him as an artist from the second statement?
- 7 Gittoes has visited many places in search of images for his artmaking. Which of the places mentioned do you recognise from television news or newspapers as areas of civil war or conflict? Ask your parents and make notes on what they know about these wars.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

Cultural Frame

- 1 In an essay of 700–800 words, discuss the work of Gittoes and one other artist who express the evils in their society in an effort to bring about change. Mention their individual methods by analysing particular examples of their work.
- 2 Compare a painting by Gittoes with the work *Guernica* by Picasso (page 32) as portrayals of human suffering due to war. You might like to use a comparison chart (page x) or a Venn diagram (page xviii) to organise your thoughts.

ARTMAKING

- 1 List or draw symbols and colours that to you represent violence, horror and pain. Now do the same for courage and strength. Link these together in an expressive artwork titled 'War'. You could make it almost abstract and include words.
- 2 Look carefully at the way Gittoes paints hands and faces. Using a similar technique, create your own artwork of a person with their hands to their face experiencing sorrow, pain or horror.

FORMS

photography, video

FRAME

Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Audiences react to her artworks according to their personal experiences and beliefs.

eBookplus

INTERVIEW WITH SHIRIN NESHAT

Use the **Shirin Neshat interview** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an interview in which this artist discusses her life and art.



Rebellious Silence 1994

RC print and ink
118.4 × 79.1 cm

© Shirin Neshat

Photo: Cynthia Preston

Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York

To a non-Muslim, the Arabic text written across her face in *Rebellious Silence* may look purely decorative, merely reinforcing her cultural background. The writing also covers the parts of the face that Islamic tradition requires women to hide. Apart from contrasting with the starkness of the black headscarf, the writing hides, yet in a strange way reveals, the gentle feminine contours of the face. We are shocked to see the gun bisecting her gentle, calm face. We question whether she has turned away from her submissive female role to embrace violence, yet she is not shown directly holding the gun. As in many Postmodern artworks, the viewer is left to interpret the image. It may be helpful when you are responding

CRITICAL STUDY

to this particular work to know that in another of the series *Stories of Martyrdom* Neshat has placed a rifle across the wrists of a woman whose upturned palms have Arabic calligraphy written on them. By including a gun Neshat seems to be suggesting that we cannot separate ideas of religion and spirituality from politics and violence. It is also interesting to note that Neshat herself posed for many of these photographs.

CRITICAL STUDY

Production still from *Logic of the Birds*
2001
© Shirin Neshat
Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York

Shown in London's Union Chapel, as well as in New York and Minneapolis, the hour-long film *Logic of the Birds*, which also involves music and live staging, is based on *The Conference of the Birds*, a famous twelfth-century fable by a Sufi poet and philosopher. It relates to the tendency of people to look for outside saviours or leaders, rather than looking inside themselves for direction. It's about self-reflection and self-discovery, the need for individuality and self-identity. As is often the case with Neshat's work, it also references the Islamic world today and the notion of individuality.



ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Shirin Neshat grew up in Iran but in 1974, at age 17, she went to California to study art. When the Islamic Revolution overtook her homeland in 1979, Neshat found herself exiled. She finally returned in 1990 to a country she barely recognised. Within this time Iran had become a strict Islamic society. Deeply affected by this radical transformation of her country, Neshat was prompted to explore Islam through her artmaking, to raise questions rather than to answer them. She was trying to come to terms with the ideology of the Islamic regime and the Revolution. In her series titled *Women of Allah*, 1993–97, she explored the role of Muslim women and the practice of wearing the full-length black outer garment called the chador. Over the revealed areas of skin, the face and hands, she superimposed Farsi text, often pieces written by female Iranian writers.



Shirin Neshat in production
Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery,
New York

Neshat is an artist who comments on issues related to feminism and multicultural influences, particularly referencing contemporary Islam. Her works often involve large black and white photographs of women overlaid with Arabic inscriptions in red and black. Her intention is to address problems of identity, race and gender. Her use of text references the strong social conventions of Arabic calligraphy. The writing often communicates its own message, as in *Speechless* 1996, in which the script that covers the side of a beautiful Arabic woman's face tells the tale of a man who wishes he had died in the Iran/Iraq war of the 1980s. Neshat attempts through her artworks to challenge stereotypes and assumptions, in particular the strong patriarchal (male-dominated) society that persists in many parts of the Islamic world. Instead of being shown as the traditional passive, subservient female, her women are often shown holding a gun, a symbol of male power and aggression. Her chosen medium is itself a challenge to Islamic Fundamentalism, which prohibits photography as a form of idolatry.

But her works not only operate on this symbolic, confrontational level; there is also a deep concern for aesthetics, the beauty and sensitivity of the image.

Neshat's photographs are not exhibited in Iran, but she has a wide following in the Western world. In 1997 she began working with the video medium, creating moving social comments using sound and images. Her film *Turbulent*, which won an award at the Venice Biennale in 1999, consists of projections of a man and a woman, both from Iran, opposite each other. As one sings, the other falls silent. This work highlights an aspect of Iranian culture: females are largely excluded from musical performances, and such a 'duel' between the sexes would not take place in such a patriarchal society. In *Rapture* 1999 Neshat continues with this theme by exploring the separation of the sexes in public life in Iran. On one projection a group of men are seen in a fortress; on the other a group of women are shown on a desert beach.

Her work *Soliloquy* 1999, shot in Turkey and the USA, explores the differences between modern and traditional communities, highlighting the contrasting ways of life and social structures. Neshat encourages the viewer to reflect on the tensions between a strict, religious-based, collective cultural identity and one driven by individual concerns. In her film and video work of 2008 Neshat follows the lives of oppressed women as symbols of a country in crisis fighting for a sense of independence from foreign forces. *Munis* 2008 explores the story of a young woman who is oppressed by her brother yet strives for social justice. *Fazeh* 2008 expresses the anguish of a religious woman whose ideals of marriage and family are shattered by rape. It follows her emotional and psychological breakdown while also highlighting the dilemmas of this pivotal time in Iranian history.

Use the **Shirin Neshat** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this artist.

Throughout her photography work Neshat has used the chador (the head-to-toe outer garment that is the common dress code for women in Iran) as a symbol of female identity and repression. Her art neither condemns nor glorifies Islam, but challenges viewers to rethink their own ideas, assumptions and expectations. She wants her audience to react on a personal and emotional level.

Artist's statements

'I'm really interested in social justice, and if an artist has a certain power of being heard and voicing something important, it's right to do it. It could still be done in such a way that it's not aggressive or overly didactic. I'm trying to find that form. . . So I'll make work that may touch on the absurdity and hypocrisy at both ends and reveal how vulnerable yet powerful an individual may be in taking charge of their own destiny and refusing to be controlled spiritually, morally and politically.'

Quoted in Richard Williams, 'The exotic and the everyday', 31 October 2002, www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4536050,00.html

'I see my work as a visual discourse on the subject of feminism and contemporary Islam — a discourse that puts certain myths and realities to the test, claiming that they are far more complex than most of us imagined. . .'

AGNSW Press Release for Tooba, 16 December 2005 – 29 January 2006, www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/media/archives_2005/neshat

CRITICAL PRACTICE

Richard Williams,

'The exotic and the everyday',
The Guardian, 31 October 2002,
www.guardian.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4536050,00.html,
a critical review of Neshat's short films
Turbulent, *Rapture* and *Fervour*, exhibited at
the Serpentine Gallery, London, in 2000.

'People lingered in front of the screens, transfixed by not just the austere beauty of the images but the intensity and directness of the emotional charge they conveyed and, for western viewers, the sudden insights they provided into the complexities of Islam's relationship with itself and with the modern world. . . The Westerner looking at her pieces will almost certainly not see what an Iranian sees. "Sometimes it's almost as if they're totally opposite," she says. But no one could miss the real point. However abstracted and metaphoric the approach may be, however ravishingly exotic the sights and sounds, the struggle of individuals claiming the right to control their own destiny and identity is what compels the gaze.'

STUDYING ART

- 1 Why do you think Neshat placed the gun in *Rebellious Silence* as she did? How would the mood or meaning have been different if she had not cropped the image in this way or had changed the angle of the gun?
- 2 Photographs may be casual snapshots, a record of a moment in time, but Neshat clearly makes careful decisions regarding the composition of her images and the body language of her subjects. Would this image have the same power in colour? What effect does the facial expression and direction of the eyes have on its impact?
- 3 Name three symbols she has used in her photograph.
- 4 After reading the critical review by Richard Williams, quote an instance in which Williams offers an opinion or judgement of Shirin Neshat's work.
- 5 What have you learned from reading the critical review about the relationship between Neshat's work and the audience (the *Conceptual Framework*)?
- 6 How would you describe the main intention of Shirin Neshat's artmaking (the meaning she wishes to communicate)?
- 7 Do a PMI (page xv) on Neshat's work.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 Shirin Neshat, George Gittoes and Roy Lichtenstein have all explored notions of violence through their art. How do their approaches differ?
- 2 'Both Shirin Neshat and Xu Bing (a contemporary Chinese artist) use calligraphy from their own traditional cultures as a major component of their artworks to explore or promote a change in attitudes.' Discuss.

(Opposite)

Mara Country 1992

synthetic polymer paint on canvas
244 × 244 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Reproduced courtesy of The Estate
of Ginger Riley and Alcaston Gallery,
Melbourne

Ginger Riley MUNDUWALAWALA

(c. 1937–2002, Australian)

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Cultural — images, symbols and stories depicted relate to the artist's culture and beliefs

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

These paintings are the artist's interpretations of ancestral stories of his mother country.

VOCABULARY

Aboriginal of the Indigenous people of Australia except those of the Torres Strait region

Dreaming ancient time of creation, according to Aboriginal spiritual beliefs, whose stories often involve the journey of an ancestral spirit

mother country for Aboriginal people, refers to the country of the person's mother's group. 'Country' is an area traditionally owned and looked after by an Aboriginal language group or community or certain people within it, and includes the spiritual meanings and stories associated with the area.

sacred worthy of religious respect, dedicated to religion

eBookplus

TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION

Use the **Tradition and transformation** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about this artist through his artwork and a video interview.



Ginger Riley MUNDUWALAWALA

CRITICAL STUDY

Mara Country 1992 (page 41) tells the story of a meeting that took place at a rock near the junction of the Limmen Bight and Cox River. The repetition of the river in bands below stresses its importance. Bulukbun, a fire-breathing sea monster who kills people and comes in many guises, is shown. The red wedge shapes around the top add a distinctive, decorative element to his work. They relate to traditional body-painting designs.

Ginger Riley Munduwalawala paints boldly but with sensitivity towards composition and the design elements (line, shape, texture, colour). In this work the diagonal red lines balance the opposite diagonal of the shape of the white bird. He always manages to create an intriguing balance between flat, bold shapes and fine detail and pattern.

We can see in *Mara Country* how the artist experiments with visual effects — of intense pure colour against colour, of patterning and layering. His works show how aware he is of the power of space in a painting as a contrast to more textured areas. His work has vibrancy, a sense of energy, excitement and freedom.

CRITICAL STUDY

We find the same main cultural symbols and a similar colour palette in *Ngak Ngak and the Four Archers*, although there is more variety in colour and the composition is a little more complicated. This work depicts a slightly different part of the narrative. The white sea eagle Ngak Ngak is a recurring symbol in this artist's works.



Ngak Ngak and the Four Archers 1993
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
171.0 × 288.7 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne
Gift of the National Gallery Society of
Victoria, 1994
Reproduced courtesy of The Estate
of Ginger Riley and Alcaston Gallery,
Melbourne

HISTORICAL STUDY

Ginger Riley Munduwalawala, of South East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory, comes from the Mara people and regards himself as a 'coastal saltwater man'. He is a tribal elder who lives in his mother's country of Four Archers, inland from Limmen Bight on the Gulf of Carpentaria. His early life was spent between the bush, hunting and food gathering, and the Roper River Mission, where he was exposed to reading and writing and Bible stories. He left at age 15 to work on cattle stations but returned to his country in the 1970s.

An important early artistic experience was his meeting with Albert Namatjira in Alice Springs. Namatjira was the first Australian **Aboriginal** artist to work with non-traditional colours and techniques, painting beautiful desert ranges in greens, purples and pinks with a sense of realism and depth influenced by Western art.

The art of Ginger Riley Munduwalawala is an expression of the creation of the world, as he understands it. It reflects his spiritual identity and origins. Each painting explores the same subject matter, the same story and area of country, but each is different in colour and composition. The main symbols he uses to represent his '**mother country**' are the sea eagle Ngak Ngak and the dual serpent-creator, the taipan Garimala, the shark's liver tree and the Four Archers.

Ginger Riley Munduwalawala expresses his responsibilities as the Guardian of his mother country through his art. His work is an individual interpretation of his cultural traditions and the **Dreaming**. He paints creation stories, surrounding ancestral sites in bright colours, particularly blue, green and red. He often works on a large scale, which makes his bold, colourful style very distinctive. In 1993 he won the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Art Award, and he was the first Aboriginal artist to be given a major retrospective show at the National Gallery of Victoria.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

eBookplus

MUNDUWALAWALA: A SEEING ARTIST

Use the **A Seeing Artist** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an article about why this artist stands alone as an Indigenous painter.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 We know that Aboriginal paintings generally contain **sacred** meanings and thus the 'stories' they contain must be kept secret, but we can appreciate them for their exciting visual qualities. Write your own interpretation of a possible story to go with *Mara Country*. Use the storyboard technique described on page xvii to help you.

Structural Frame

- 2 What are the main symbols used by Ginger Riley Munduwalawala?
- 3 Describe the way the artist applies colour.

Historical study

- 4 What is so individual about the art of Ginger Riley Munduwalawala?
- 5 How does information about the artist's life and culture help us understand his art?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Use the library or internet to find examples of the paintings of Albert Namatjira. Write a half- to one-page description of the ways in which Namatjira's art might have influenced the paintings and style of Ginger Riley Munduwalawala.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Paint a visual representation of your suburb or area, perhaps from above or from an unusual viewpoint. You might like to introduce and interpret animals as symbols of your 'country', perhaps in a linoprint or as a poster using computer manipulation.
- 2 Create and illustrate a children's book with a white bird as the central character.
or
Create a video with a white bird as the main theme.

Sangeeta SANDRASEGAR

(b. 1977, Brisbane; currently lives and works in London)

FORM

installations — paper cut-outs

eBookplus

SANGEETA
SANDRASEGAR BLOG

Use the **Sangeeta Sandrasegar Blog** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore this artist's blog.

FRAMES

Cultural in subject matter — multiculturalism and the challenges of the intersection of cultures; *Postmodern* in her approach and the fragility of the media she uses

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Her works are interactive in that the shadows change as the viewer moves.

Untitled No. 30 2003

From the series *Goddess of Flowers* 2003

paper, pins

2 parts, each 41.5 × 24.5 cm

Collection of Isabella Dickson, Sydney

© Sangeeta Sandrasegar

Photo: Sharmila Sandrasegar



CRITICAL STUDY

Sangeeta Sandrasegar's work is inspired by the drama and violence of Bollywood films, decorative Indian henna designs (generally applied to the feet and hands of brides) and the real story of Phoolan Devi. Devi was married at 11 years old to a cruel older man. Eventually, following her rape by a group of higher-caste village men, she fled and became a bandit. After her capture and 11 years of imprisonment she entered politics. In 2001 she was assassinated outside her home in New Delhi, India. This work draws on popular culture and on various craft traditions. It is a reflection on the complexity of culture and gender roles in Indian society.

Sandrasegar further developed her cut-paper technique in her 2007 series *Theatre of the Oppressed* (opposite), but extended it with other media in this series. Figures seem to emerge from the picture plane, taking prominence in different positions, their body language expressing an emotional state, while cultural icons are incorporated into a decorative backdrop that suggests a narrative.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Sandrasegar's work explores multiculturalism. She herself was born of Malaysian-Indian and Australian parents, and has lived between her parents' countries of birth. She deals explicitly with the intersection of differing, at times clashing cultures, investigating social and political similarity and disparity. Sandrasegar works from a feminist perspective, examining the various ways culture, sexuality and identity are constructed and interpreted. Her sources include literary

histories and contemporary political narratives. She references tales such as those found in Indian miniatures, in the *Arabian Nights* and in Japanese anime. Her art therefore references narratives that speak across time and cultures and carry meaning for our present cross-cultural world. Other works in her 2003 exhibition *Goddess of Flowers* featured linear 'drawings' of figures entwined among delicate cut-out patterns of traditionally decorated Indian feet. In her 2004 work *I'm Half Sick of Shadows* she drew on the Japanese myth of the great earth spider. She created an installation suggesting a lantern crossed with web-like structures, while within the shadows and tendrils of the web could be discerned different cultural representations of femininity and resistance.

Sandrasegar sees art as a form of language, a way to have a conversation with people. Her main interests are post-colonial theory, cultural studies and the construct of conventions in society. Much of her work evolves from her wide reading, particularly stories and myths — how they grow and are altered through the telling, revealing stereotypes, politics and hypocrisy.

Sandrasegar works with installations of finely cut paper (at times embellished with beads or sequins). The intricate shapes cast strong shadows on walls and into the gallery space through her use of strong directional lighting. The shadows seem to move and suggest new meanings dealing with self-identity, culture and the spaces in between, both literally and figuratively, as the viewer moves within the exhibition area. Her visual language concentrates on the fragility of paper cut-outs and the transience of cast shadows, its beautiful, delicate, fine detail enticing the viewer to investigate, at times to find, a more sombre deeper meaning. It is an art to be experienced directly. In her 2008 work, based on the Hindu text the *Bhagavad Gita*, featuring a dialogue between the god Krishna and his friend the warrior Arjuna, she has continued to work with the shadow, but instead of cut paper has used embroidered felt as her medium. Each small object is suspended out from the wall, its shadow creating a meditative quality, yet each embroidered felt object, by its size and surface quality, entices the viewer to hold it in the palm of their hand.

'Her beautiful cut-outs tell stories of sexuality and adventure as they cross the barriers of different cultures. They could only hang on a well-lit white wall, but space, light and shadow would never look the same again.'

Joanna Mendelsohn, quoted in *Art Collector*, issue 31, 2005, at the time of the *Primavera 2004* exhibition



Untitled No. 11 2007

From the series *Theatre of the Oppressed* 2007

paper foil, cartridge paper, watercolour
45 × 47 cm

Private collection

© Sangeeta Sandrasegar

Photo: Sue Blackburn

CRITICAL PRACTICE

STUDYING ART

- 1 How does Sangeeta Sandrasegar's work challenge past conventions of what an artwork is and how it is viewed?
- 2 Sandrasegar combines drawing and sculptural elements in her work. Explain how her work fits into both categories. (*Hint: Consider line and negative space.*)
- 3 How does her work connect with her own self-identity?
- 4 What makes her work art rather than a cultural craft using paper folding and cutting (such as Japanese paper craft)?

ESSAY QUESTION

Explain the work of two artists who combine two cultures in their artmaking.

ARTMAKING

Investigate your own cultural background (you may have to go back a few generations) and create an artwork that has images, symbols or stories from at least two cultures. Do a peer evaluation (page xi) of your finished works.

Ah XIAN

(b. 1960 China; lives and works in Australia and China)

FORM

ceramic
sculpture

FRAMES

Cultural and Postmodern in
challenging our notions of displaced
persons and cultural identity

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A physical art object
represents the tension
between two cultures.

eBookplus

THE FACE: AH XIAN

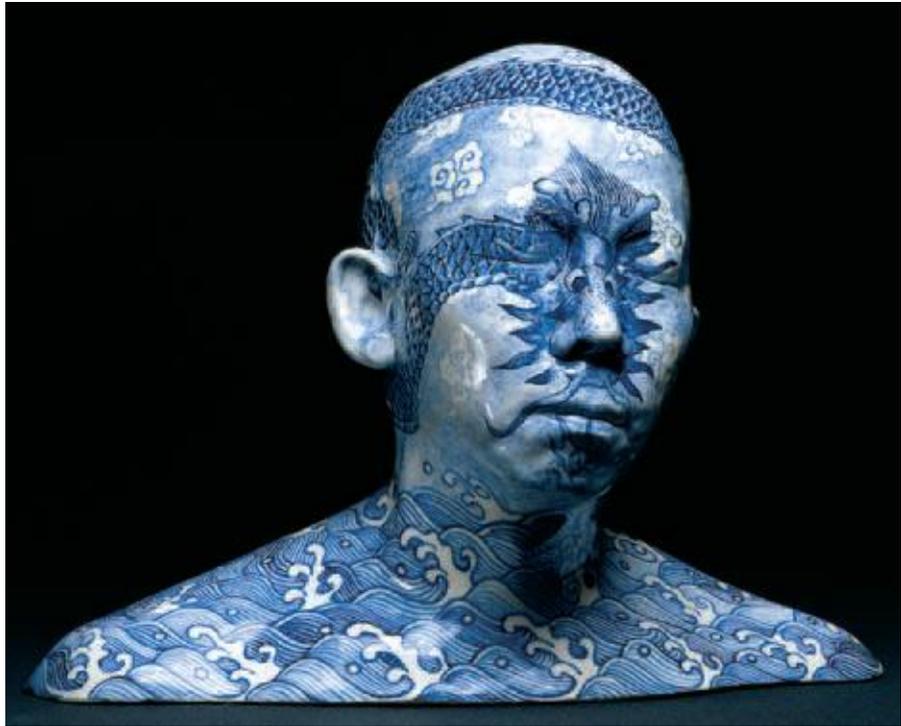
Use the **Ah Xian** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an article about the life and works of this artist.

China China — Bust 10 1998

porcelain, cast from life, carved and
hand-painted with cobalt blue underglaze
31 × 40 × 21.5 cm

The Kenneth and Yasuko Myer Collection
of Contemporary Asian Art. Purchased
2000 with funds from The Myer
Foundation, a project of the Sidney Myer
Centenary Celebration 1899–1999,
through the Queensland Art Gallery
Foundation

Collection: Queensland Art Gallery
Photo: Ray Fulton



CRITICAL STUDY

Human Human — Dragon 2000–01

carved lacquer bust 1
lacquer carved relief on resin fibreglass
with dragon design
46.5 × 45 × 19 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: Ray Fulton



Although he has used traditional Chinese methods of ornamented porcelain with cobalt blue decoration, and it is possible to find vases from the Qing Dynasty (1662–1722) with wave and dragon motifs, Ah Xian's interpretation in *China China — Bust 10* (above) is contemporary. Instead of a utilitarian vase he has decorated a porcelain sculpture cast from a real person. This suggests a search for identity, as the individual features of the person are disguised by the traditional motifs. In their simplification and placement on the bust, the wave and dragon motifs are reminiscent of tattoo culture and Mambo graphics. He is therefore a contemporary artist who draws on his adopted Australian context while exploring the artistic traditions and cultures of his upbringing. These works were produced in Jindezhen, which was the centre of China's porcelain production in the early Ming Dynasty and continuing into the Qing, when export of these wares to Europe became important. The dragon relates to Chinese mythology and cosmology, symbolising male qualities such as vigour and potency. It is interesting to note that tattoos were originally also a symbol of male endurance and strength.

The models for this series of sculptures were men and women, Chinese and non-Chinese, many of them friends of Ah Xian.

CRITICAL STUDY

The red lacquer surface of *Human Human — Dragon* (left) is achieved by painting multiple layers of a sap that is native to China. This work is one of Ah Xian's more aggressive pieces, not just for the colour but for the way the dragon motif coils around the face. By incising into the surface (relief carving), he suggests the dragon is eating away at the flesh.

Cloisonné enamel, as used in *Human Human — Lotus* (right),

CRITICAL STUDY

a traditional Chinese technique, is a surface created by the fusion of enamels onto a copper base. Like his porcelain works, cloisonné also has to be fired in a kiln. Ah Xian has used this technique to decorate this life-size sculpture of a female body. The choice of lotus flowers for decoration references Buddhism (the lotus is a symbol of purity and perfection and of hope), while lily pads and flowers in general are associated in Chinese literature with female beauty, refinement and delicacy.

Ah Xian moved to Australia in 1990 following a stint as visiting

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

artist at the Tasmanian School of Art. After a decade of self-imposed exile from his homeland following the Tiananmen Square uprising Ah Xian returned to China for nine months. The *China China* busts are a result of that period, when he worked closely with a number of local artisans, who meticulously painted Chinese and Buddhist motifs following the contours of each individual body cast. Ah Xian has said that spending a few years in Australia gave him a better perspective on China.

Ah Xian works in the traditional Chinese artistic traditions of porcelain, lacquer and cloisonné, applying these conventions with a mastery of technique. He uses the decorative motifs of dragons, birds and flowers to comment on his cultural background. The bust itself is a Western portrait tradition, so his works explore two cultures, at times bridging East and West but also hinting at a continuing divide in the tension between the sculptural form and the surface decoration. In these works Ah Xian seeks a resolution between his own cultural traditions and the conventions and values of the Western art tradition. In his *China, China* series the individual busts are casts of various real-life people, but they also appear anonymous since the eyes are closed and the faces expressionless, while the landscape, butterflies, birds and other decorative features seem to disfigure the human features or imprison the figure. This is particularly evident in the way the eyes and mouths are prominently covered. They are still and silent figures, symbolic of a place rather than an individual personality.

In 2009 Ah Xian extended his practice with a series of bronze busts, titled *Metaphysica*.

STUDYING ART

Another Postmodern artist, Janine Antoni, has used the tradition of the sculptural bust as a starting point for her artworks, but instead of transforming the figures (self-portraits) with painted-on decoration in the way Ah Xian has, Antoni has made hers of soap or chocolate. Similarly, Marc Quinn has made a portrait bust using his own blood. How are these artists Postmodern?

ESSAY QUESTION

'Both Shirin Neshat and Ah Xian use art as a means of cultural identity as "displaced persons" and as a way of addressing political change and challenging audiences' perceptions regarding their countries of birth.' Discuss.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Investigate the work of Zhang Huan to discover similarities and differences between his artmaking and Ah Xian's.



Human Human — Lotus 2000–01

cloisonné figure 1
hand-beaten copper, finely enamelled using the
cloisonné technique

158 × 55.5 × 32 cm

Purchased 2002. The Queensland Government's
Gallery of Modern Art Acquisitions Fund
Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

Photo: Ray Fulton

Dorothea LANGE

[1895–1965, American]

FORM

photography

FRAMES

Cultural

eBookplus

DOROTHEA LANGE INTERVIEW, 1964

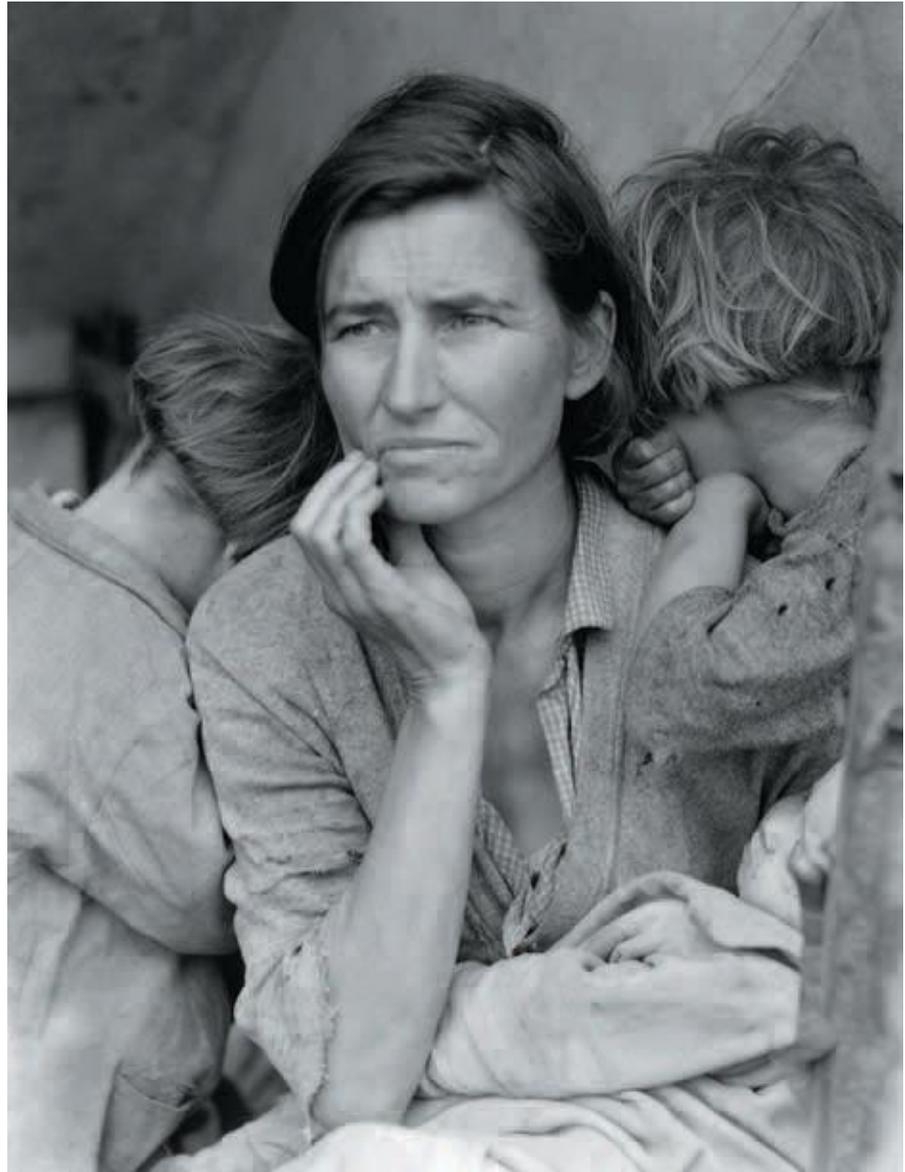
Use the **Dorothea Lange interview** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read a transcript of an interview with this artist.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dorothea Lange is best known for her photographs documenting the social and economic event of the Great Depression in America. They are very personal, sympathetic responses.

VOCABULARY

Great Depression the worldwide economic slump in the 1930s resulting in mass unemployment, poverty and hardship
solitary alone, isolated
sympathetic compassionate, understanding



Migrant Mother March 1936
Nipomo, California, USA
black and white photograph
Library of Congress/Science
Photo Library
© Dorothea Lange

CRITICAL STUDY

In the photograph *Migrant Mother*, Lange shows her ability as a keen observer. She responds to a situation with feeling, bringing us closer to the emotional and painful experiences of others. Her work has significance beyond the individuals she photographed and beyond the contemporary time frame.

Lange's photography combines visual directness and clarity with a strong sense of balance and composition. Yet the photographs also reveal an emotional response to their subject. This image of a migrant agricultural worker's family shows the 32-year-old widow and mother of seven children. Because of the failure of the pea crop they are destitute and living in a camp.

Lange is **sympathetic** to the mother's situation and her obvious desperation over how she is to feed and care for her children. The image makes us aware of the mother's love for her children, her strength and the signs of premature aging brought on by her harsh life. We are made aware of the plight of the baby, and that it may not survive, not because Lange has made it the centre of the photograph but because of the worried look on the mother's face and the way she appears to be distancing herself from it. The mother has to be strong because she is the one the family leans on and relies on. In this image Lange has given beautiful form to her anger about what poor people were forced to endure.

CRITICAL STUDY

In *White Angel Bread Line*, time seems to stand still for these people waiting for help. The diagonal tilt of the railing draws us into the photograph. One man in the foreground becomes our focus: light falls on his hat and hands, as he leans towards us, deep in thought. There is an intensity of concentration in his stance and gestures. Although **solitary**, he represents and exemplifies all those waiting. These men, without work or food, are forced to line up behind barriers in order to receive a charitable handout, yet they have retained some of their dignity.

Artist's statement

'For me documentary photography is less a matter of subject and more a matter of approach. The important thing is not what's photographed, but how. My own approach is based upon three considerations. First — hands off! Whatever I photograph I do not molest or tamper with or arrange. Second — a sense of place. Whatever I photograph I try to picture as part of the surroundings, as having roots. Third — a sense of time. Whatever I photograph I try to show as having its position in the past or in the present.'

Lange's childhood was unhappy. At seven she developed polio, which left her with a limp, setting her apart from her peers. Her father deserted the family when she was 12. Dorothea spent most of her teenage years with her grandmother, with whom she was often in conflict. Perhaps this helped her develop sympathy for and sensitivity to the problems of others.

Lange began work as a commercial portrait photographer in the 1920s in San Francisco. She worked with a variety of subjects until the early 1960s, including her own family life and people in foreign lands. By the 1930s she was documenting what she saw in the streets — the waterfront strikes and breadlines and the down-and-out homeless people of the cities and suburbs. She photographed the tragedy and humiliation of poverty, yet managed to convey a sense of human dignity and strength. Her photographs sensitively interpret her subjects and their misfortune, rather than exploiting their helplessness. Above all, she manages to give them a sense of dignity and determination. Her themes



White Angel Bread Line 1933
San Francisco, USA
black and white photograph
Private collection
Photo Inc./Photolibrary
© Dorothea Lange

Quoted in Keith F. Harris,
The Photographs of Dorothea Lange,
Hallmark Abrams, USA, 1995

HISTORICAL STUDY

also reveal a deep interest in the bonds of family and community. Lange explores how gestures, facial expressions and posture can express feelings and character.

Lange is best known for the photographs she made for the US Farm Security Administration between 1935 and 1939. This, her most powerful work, revolved around displaced farm families and migrant workers during the **Great Depression** of the 1930s, when 14 million American workers were unemployed. Her photographs both record (as documentary) and reveal a personal interpretation.

After the US naval base of Pearl Harbor was bombed, bringing America into World War II, Japanese-Americans were rounded up and placed in internment camps. The War Relocation Authority hired Lange to document the process. She photographed Japanese neighbourhoods, processing centres and the camp facilities. To capture the spirit of the camps, Lange combined images of human courage and dignity with physical evidence of their indignities and suffering. Her photographs convey the feelings of the victims as well as the facts of their experiences.

In the 1950s her subjects included references to the California legal system and small-town life.

Dorothea Lange used her camera to teach people how to see with insight and compassion.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

1 *Subjective Frame*

Describe your feelings and opinion about one of Lange's photographs.

Structural Frame

- 2 How would you change the composition, facial expressions or gestures in one of Lange's photographs to make them less sympathetic, so their subjects appeared merely as weak victims?
- 3 Lange says she does not 'tamper with or arrange' her subjects. What devices can a photographer use to create an interesting composition and a mood in a photograph?

Postmodern Frame

- 4 Do you think we respond to Lange's photographs in the same way as her original audience or viewers did? Do her images have the same meanings now as they did when they were created?
- 5 Lange has said she was hoping to bring about changes in society through her photographs by making people aware of her subjects' hardships. But do you think Lange was invading these people's privacy?

Historical study

6 *Subjective Frame*

After reading a little about Lange's life, how do you think her own experiences might have influenced her choices of subject and her responses to her subjects?

7 *Cultural Frame — Conceptual Framework*

How is Lange's work a documentation of social events, a historical record of American culture from the 1930s to the 1960s?

ARTMAKING

- 1 Who do you think are the victims of our society? Collect photographs on this theme from newspapers and magazines as a basis for a collage. Include drawings and use handwritten thoughts (like diary entries) and colour washes to unify your work.
- 2 Take a series of photographs based on the bonds of family or community.

POSTMODERN FRAME

LIST OF ARTISTS

Challenging conventions — the art object and its exhibition

Walter De Maria p. 52
Damien Hirst p. 55

Popular culture, mass media, feminism

Barbra Kruger p. 57
Jenny Holzer p. 59
Jaqueline Fraser p. 62

Appropriation

Lin Onus p. 64

Technology

Nam June Paik p. 67
Gary Hill p. 69
Pipilotti Rist p. 72

Artists who work from the *Postmodern Frame* are concerned with challenging mainstream values, conventions and ideas, and views of history. Artists and writers began to question what Modernism was about — not the styles themselves, but their place in contemporary culture and reactions to and by society. This led to a break in the history of art — a split from Modernism rather than a rejection of it. Postmodernism challenges both the Modernist notion of creativity as individualist self-expression and the notion of originality.

While Postmodern artworks question established conventions and traditions, they also challenge what an artwork is, what it can represent and how it can be created. Ideas about artistic genius and the ‘masterpiece’ come under scrutiny. Artworks need not be unique, precious, beautiful, enduring physical objects that are exhibited in a gallery or museum and can be purchased. Images from the mass media, comic-style images and kitsch become acceptable subjects.

Particularly with the novel forms and techniques offered by new technology, an artist may be the ideas person behind an artwork rather than its skilled creator. Artworks have also become more interactive: as well as interpreting an artwork, viewers of Postmodern art may in some cases be able to alter or become part of it.

Artists use a variety of methods within this frame to reinterpret and critique ideas, values and power relations through the use of irony, parody, quotation, pastiche and appropriation.

Key issues

- Individuality (a Western concept in which the self takes precedence over the family or group, which is most often central in traditional and indigenous cultures)
- Gender roles and inequalities (particularly in the artworld)
- Political statements on identity and colonialism
- Land rights and power
- Race, culture (high versus popular), multiculturalism (equity and individual freedom)
- Poverty, world debt, mass migration
- Popular art and history

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INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2189



Barbara Kruger
Untitled (*I shop therefore I am*) 1987
282 × 287 cm
photographic silkscreen on vinyl
© Barbara Kruger
Courtesy of Mary Boone Gallery,
New York

Walter DE MARIA

(b. 1935, American)

FORM

installations

FRAME

Postmodern — rather than physical objects, his works are experiential, requiring the audience to participate through their presence. Each experience is unique. His art is exhibited outside the traditional gallery space.

VOCABULARY

land art (sometimes called *earth sculpture*) refers to works outdoors. Land artists (e.g. Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer and Richard Serra) seek contact with natural, uncontaminated places.

minimalism approach using pure, simple, often precise forms to create art

site-specific art art created for a particular site or location, generally outdoors. It offers an experience unique to the viewer at that location. Originating in the 1960s, it challenged traditional ideas about the nature of art and the way it should be displayed (see also Christo and Jeanne-Claude, page 83).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Walter De Maria sees the land as the material or interactive element in his work. He challenges our definitions of what an artwork can be.

eBookplus

WALTER DE MARIA BIOGRAPHY

Use the **Walter De Maria** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about this artist.



The Lightning Field 1977

long-term installation in western

New Mexico

Photo: John Cliett

© Dia Art Foundation

CRITICAL STUDY

The Lightning Field is an example of **land art** — a permanent ‘earth sculpture’ located in an isolated, high-desert area of New Mexico. It consists of custom-made stainless-steel poles with solid, pointed tips covering a 1 mile (1.6 km) by 1 kilometre

area. Each of the 400 poles is a different length to compensate for variations in the terrain. They range from 8.14 metres to 4.6 metres so the tops are of an even height (like a bed of nails). They are arranged in a rectangular shape (16 poles wide × 25 poles long, spaced 67.05 metres apart). Any one of the poles can act as a lightning conductor. The work merges with the flat desert stretching out to a horizon of mountain ridges. The changing sky and light conditions alter the work. When the sun is at its brightest, the poles seem to disappear.

De Maria's works are usually **site-specific** and monumental (very large-scale and of lasting importance). With no obvious sense of the presence of the artist, viewing this work is almost like visiting an ancient monument. There is a feeling of anticipation, almost a physical tension.

The full experience of *The Lightning Field* is gained by visiting it alone or with a small group of people over an extended period of time. Trips and accommodation in a cabin nearby can be organised through the Dia Center for the Arts. There is a limit of six people per visit and it is accessible only from 1 May to 31 October (see website www.diacenter.org).



2000 Sculpture, Nov 1999
Zuercher Kunsthaus, Zurich,
Switzerland
© AAP/AP

This installation, exhibited in a gallery in Zurich, Switzerland, at the turn of the millennium, was created as a positive symbol for the future. The use of repetition suggests a progression or going forward. The spaces between the 2000 'energy sticks' are regular and controlled, the pattern uninterrupted, evoking a sense of infinity. A calm, even meditative quality has been created in this large, light-filled space. The sense of order and mathematical precision, and the minimalist approach to media, are characteristic of much of De Maria's work.

De Maria has been making important contributions to modern art since 1961–62. Each of his works shows a link between nature and abstraction. Each consists of a situation in which objects or matter (such as rocks) interact with a location, whether an art museum or a natural environment. The work becomes part of that location. De Maria avoids traditional art restraints, frames or pedestals to display or contain his work.

Mile Drawing 1968

Working in the desert, De Maria set up parallel chalk lines running half a mile along the dry lake of El Mirage in the Mojave Desert, California. The chalk line began to disappear almost as soon as it was inscribed. The work was transient (not lasting) and unmarketable (it could not be sold or even visited). This work poses questions about art. Which is the artwork — the act of drawing the lines or the photographs that were sold to finance the work?

CRITICAL STUDY

HISTORICAL STUDY

OTHER WORKS

Use the **The Broken Kilometer** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore this installation in further detail.

The Broken Kilometer 1979

Located at 393 West Broadway in New York City, this artwork is composed of 500 highly polished, round, solid brass rods, each two metres long and five centimetres in diameter. The 500 rods are placed in five parallel rows of 100 rods each. The rods are so placed that the spaces between the rods increase by five millimetres with each consecutive space from front to back.

The New York Earth Room 1977

Located at 141 Wooster Street, New York, this is the artist's third earth room (the first two in Germany no longer exist). This interior earth sculpture consists of 197 cubic metres of earth over 335 square metres of floor space to a depth of 56 centimetres. It has been on view to the public since 1980 and was commissioned by the Dia Center for the Arts.

The Vertical Kilometer 1977

For this earth sculpture a special shaft was constructed and packed with earth. A brass rod was inserted 1000 metres into the ground. It was not only a measurement but suggestive of a link with the Earth's interior.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

In his work De Maria refers to our culture's technology (as in the work *A Computer Which Will Solve Every Problem in the World/3–12 Polygon* 1984), the nature of metals and the consumption (using up) of the Earth's resources. His work dwells on cosmic forces and the way humankind tries to take control of the Earth through measurement (*The Broken Kilometer* 1979). He relies on simple, often repeated shapes following the Modernist idea of **minimalism**.

De Maria is a highly organised artist who works with precision. He is interested in the concepts of timelessness and infinity and mathematical sets and structures, and he applies these scientific and mathematical interests to his art. He also has a keen interest in human sociology. Both the concept and the theatrical element of the artwork's presentation are important.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Subjective Frame

- 1 Imagine you were lost in the desert. You had been walking for miles and a storm was approaching. Then you came upon De Maria's *The Lightning Field*. How do you think you would react to this discovery?
- 2 Which aspect of De Maria's work do you relate to most:
 - the scientific precision and links to mathematics and measurement, or
 - their natural materials and dramatic presentation/setting?
 Why?

Postmodern Frame

- 3 How does De Maria's work question your ideas about what an artwork is? You might like to do a PMI (page xv) on his work to help you formulate your opinions.
- 4 The fact that most of De Maria's work is not easily accessible to view creates a different kind of audience for his work. Consider, for example, seeing a photograph of the painting *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci and then seeing it for yourself in the Louvre in Paris. Now consider this photograph of *The Lightning Field* and think about what it must be like to visit it in person. Which photograph do you think would prepare you best for seeing the original artwork, and why?

ESSAY QUESTION

Discuss the similarities and differences between the work of Walter De Maria and of British artist Andy Goldsworthy.

ARTMAKING

Consider how you could make an audience more aware of the Earth's resources using simple repeated shapes in an artwork. Write a proposal for your idea and suggest where you would construct it. Consider a site in your local environment or in a remote place you may have visited. Include drawings, models and/or photographs.

FORM

sculpture, installations

FRAME

Postmodern

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Hirst's works are intended to shock the audience. The artwork is a result of his ideas and ability to convey meaning rather than the traditional skill of painting or sculpting.

VOCABULARY

commercialise reduce to a product that can be bought and sold
confronting boldly challenging or opposing, shocking
optimism positive feeling that everything will turn out for the best
sensational causing great excitement or controversy

DISCUSSION

Consider the title of this work and any possible meanings.

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DAMIEN HIRST ONLINE

Use the **Damien Hirst** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.

The viewer's first reaction to the artwork below is one of shock that these are real animals presented to us in such a way in an art gallery. The glass cases of cow parts in formaldehyde solution seem to be more suited to a zoological museum. Their **confronting** presence makes us consider what the artist is trying to say.

CRITICAL STUDY

Artist's statements

'Art is like medicine — it can heal.'

Quoted in B. Riemschneider and U. Grosenick, *Art at the Turn of the Millennium*, Taschen, Cologne, 1999, p. 226

'You walk past any butcher's and it's full of cows and pigs and sheep, and then you suddenly take one out of that context, and it's bought from exactly the same place, and you're making a statement in a way against it. You're trying to put the personality back into the animals and all of a sudden everybody's up in arms.'

Transcript of interview on BBC News, 24 September 1999

Damien Hirst's paintings and sculptures are concerned with the relationship between life, sickness and death. People look at his **sensational** works and presume he is consumed with the notion of death. However, he is also concerned with life and the way we use it — the way we **commercialise** it and the way we study it.

Hirst is often referred to as the 'bad boy' of British art. He was one of the artists in the controversial exhibition *Sensation: Young British Artists from the Saatchi Collection*, shown at the Royal Academy in London in 1997 and at the Brooklyn Museum of Art in the United States in early 2000. Plans to show it at the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra were cancelled.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Some Comfort Gained from the Acceptance of the Inherent Lies in Everything 1996

Installation: 12 tanks, each 200 × 90 × 30 cm
 Dissected cow parts in formaldehyde
 Jay Jopling/White Cube, London
 Reproduced courtesy of Damien Hirst



Damien HIRST

Hirst's work can be disturbing. In *A Thousand Years* 1990, death is represented in a direct way by the exhibition of a cow's head. Flies buzz around, eating the corpse. In this way Hirst also represents the life cycle and we are reminded of the battle of life against death.

In 1991 Hirst created his most famous work, in which a dead five-metre tiger shark is exhibited in a glass case, suspended in formaldehyde solution. Being presented like an exhibit in a natural history museum, it suggests conservation as well as death. It is at once frightening yet intriguing, as is reflected in its title — *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Something Living*. Viewers are shocked and confronted as they peer into the tank at this predator that has been responsible for many human deaths. It evokes fear and the realisation of our own mortality. But there is also a fascination, similar to that felt by the motorist who slows down to look at a traffic accident.

The History of Pain 1999 relates to earlier works created in 1995. One, called *Loving in a World of Desire*, involved a brightly coloured beach ball bobbing on a column of air. In another, called *A Celebration at Least*, partly deflated party balloons float in front of a striped party backdrop. The sense of **optimism** in these works is displaced by a feeling of dread in *The History of Pain*, as a white ball is suspended above a box pierced with several dozen sharp knives. The fragility of existence is emphasised as we ponder what would happen if the air supply was cut. This is consistent in theme with his animals in formaldehyde. The main concept is the action of the world on things, and the futile (useless) effort to hold off inevitable destruction and decay.

Hirst's October 2000 show at the Gagosian Gallery, New York, was titled *Theories, Models, Methods, Approaches, Assumptions, Results and Findings*. It was a five-room exhibition including displays in separate glass cabinets of:

- mammal skeletons and a human skeleton on a glass cross with bobbing, ping-pong-ball eyes
- two autopsy tables complete with cheese sandwich and cadavers (human bodies that were apparently fake)
- garbage bags containing 'body parts' and air fresheners
- 8000 handcrafted, neatly arranged pills and a table of surgical instruments.

The show has been referred to as a mini amusement park of horrifying and amusing references to anatomy.

In 2009 Hirst returned to painting.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Postmodern Frame

- 1 Why do you think Hirst tries to shock the public?
- 2 Hirst has been criticised for his subject matter, but death has long been a traditional subject in art. Can you think of examples?
- 3 Violence, death and fear are also common subjects of our mass media. Can you name a video clip, movie or song lyrics that make you think about death?
- 4 The following is an extract from a press release. Find instances in it of:
 - factual information (historical writing)
 - opinion or judgement (critical writing).

'As one of the most recognized talents of the Young British Art movement, Hirst has risen to international prominence, startling the art world and the world at large with brilliantly conceived projects that are instantly identifiable as the work of a unique and provocative imagination. Often controversial, his most celebrated work has never shied away from the terrible beauty that lies in death and the inevitable decay contained in beauty. Hirst's works continue to infuse everyday objects with a sense of the sublime and the absurd . . .' (info@gagosian.com)

- 5 How successful do you think the press release would be in convincing the public to come to the exhibition and perhaps buy the work? Why?

Barbara KRUGER

(b. 1945, American)

FORM

photography and text

eBookplus

BARBARA KRUGER ONLINE

Use the **Barbara Kruger** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.

FRAME

Postmodern in challenging society's stereotypes and gender expectations, as well as traditional artmaking methods

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kruger's works confront the audience.



Untitled (*I shop therefore I am*) 1987
282 × 287 cm
photographic silkscreen on vinyl
© Barbara Kruger
Courtesy of Mary Boone Gallery,
New York

Since Kruger is aware of how signs operate and are circulated, she has also used this image on T-shirts. This artwork comments on how our identity is constructed by the representations and expectations of society. It is part of her series on money and consumerism, which includes *Untitled (When I hear the word culture I take out my checkbook)*, *Untitled (Money can buy you love)* and *Untitled (Buy me I'll change your life)*.

Barbara Kruger began work as a graphic designer — an experience that greatly influenced the subjects, techniques and forms of her work. In particular, it gave her an interest in the seductive nature of advertising. She learned to use an economy of image, cropping and selecting, accompanying the image with text that was laden with meaning and fixed the gaze of the viewer. She is highly aware of the power of images and the capacity of signs to affect our attitudes and belief systems. Her other key influences are television, movies and the stereotypical situations of everyday life.

The purpose of Kruger's art is to erode our passivity and unthinking acceptance of social norms. It is an art of empowerment, reacting to issues of identity (*Untitled (Why you are who you are)* 1987 and *Untitled (You are not yourself)* 1982), politics

CRITICAL STUDY

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

(*Untitled (You are the perfect crime)* 1984 and *Untitled (Your comfort is my silence)* 1981) and consumerism, growing out of the feminist movement of the 1970s. Her reaction to a controlling patriarchal (male-dominated) society is perhaps best seen in her works *Untitled (We have received orders not to move)* 1982 and *Untitled (We don't need another hero)* 1985.

In her artworks Kruger raises gender issues, questioning the stereotypes and role models so often portrayed in the media. She investigates how gender difference is reinforced by the way it is portrayed. Traditionally women have been shown in film, advertising and art as passive objects of desire for the male viewer. In advertising, the woman is considered as a subject, rather than an object, only when she is targeted as a consumer, but even then she is led to identify herself as desirable to men. Kruger also looks at the way our ideas and values regarding violence, power and sexuality are formed through language and images. Because of her background in advertising, she uses the methods and devices of advertising but adds a moral twist. She attacks the way self-identity, desire and public opinion are manipulated in our commercial society.

Text (words) is an essential element of her artmaking practice. She often uses the pronouns *I*, *we* and *you* to challenge the audience to place themselves in the artwork. Kruger's work is also distinguished by its limited use of colour (black, white, red), which defers to the imagery and text the full visual impact.

Kruger displays her work in public places, as posters on buses and billboards on buildings, and on shopping bags, as well as in galleries as 'posters', installations and objects. By 1994 she was extending her choice of media to include sound, and in 1998 she drew on her love of the cinema by showing rear-screen projections of images with the text now covering both the walls and the floor of the gallery space.

Kruger has also worked as an editor, curator, lecturer and film critic for *Artforum*. She designs posters and book covers and has been engaged in collaborative projects for highly innovative parks.

Artist's statement

'I work with pictures and words because they have the ability to determine who we are, what we want to be, and what we become.'

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AUDIO: BARBARA KRUGER'S TWELVE

Barbara Kruger discusses her work *Twelve* in this audio podcast.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: AUD-0001

STUDYING ART

- 1 Cropping (cutting off the edges to focus on a particular area) of an image is an important technique used by photographers and advertising people. How would the power or message of the artwork change if Kruger had decided to include the face in this artwork?
- 2 'In her culturally informed artmaking, Kruger eliminated the personal elements.' What do you think this statement means, and how does it affect the impact or meaning of her work?
- 3 Postmodernists often shock or challenge the audience to rethink their beliefs or society's values. What value or social expectation does this work challenge?
- 4 Postmodernists often try to reach a wide audience and may use non-traditional art media. How is Kruger's work Postmodern? Present your ideas in a single bubble map (page xvi).

SHORT ESSAY QUESTION

Analyse the relationship of text to image in the work of Barbara Kruger. Consider how successful her work is as a form of communication.

Extension work

Refer also to the work of another artist who uses text, such as Shirin Neshat (page 37), Jean-Paul Basquiat or Colin McCahon. Consider using a comparison chart or double bubble map (page xiii) to organise your thoughts.

or

Kruger uses images and techniques from advertising to make art that relates to everyday life. How is her work similar to the Pop artists? Consider the English Pop artist Richard Hamilton or the American Roy Lichtenstein (pages 33 and 215). Try using a Venn diagram to bring together your ideas (page xviii).

ARTMAKING

Take digital photographs of our commercial world, such as street scenes or shopping centres. Cut out stereotypical images (male or female) from magazines. Scan these into the computer and, using software such as Photoshop, insert these 'figures' into your photos to create a social comment or humour (consider scale and position). You might like to make decisions on what images to collect by using a cluster map (page xii). (These could be joined together to form a combined statement from the class. As a group, consider their placement and discuss the overall effect.)

or

Scan an image from an advertisement or artwork. Create your own statement using one or more words to make a social comment on gender.

Jenny HOLZER

(b. 1950, American)

FORM

installations

FRAMES

Postmodern, Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Holzer's is public art, rarely designed for a gallery. It transmits powerful social, environmental and political messages to as wide an audience as possible, using words to convey her concerns.

VOCABULARY

biases prejudices, opinions that prevent a fair consideration
cliché an obvious remark or expression
context the setting in which a work is created or displayed — its surroundings, time or place, the facts or circumstances of an event
installation artwork created for a particular site or gallery, creating a complete environment
Postmodern an art movement that challenges art traditions and the idea of originality
provocative aiming to stir up or arouse

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JENNY HOLZER ONLINE

Use the **Jenny Holzer** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.



Survival 1983–85 was the first art series written for electronic signs. Each work consists of one statement with a challenging double meaning. We are so used to the idea 'Give me what I want' that it takes us a moment to grasp the meaning of Jenny Holzer's confronting twist. Holzer does not provide answers, but rather allows for multiple meanings. Her work is essentially optimistic — there is hope.

CRITICAL STUDY

In the conceptual work on page 60 based on the written language Holzer challenges conventional truisms, such as in her work *You are a victim of the rules you live by*. As with many of her works, she has chosen a public place (although in this case it is an art gallery) in which to convey messages that provoke thought about private fears, stimulating a reaction from the audience. More than 300 of her messages were installed in a scrolling LED text screen. Additional messages were engraved on granite benches arranged in a circle. The contrast of flashing, technologically

CRITICAL STUDY

From *Survival* 1983–85
electronic sign
6.1 × 12.2 m
Installation: from *The Survival Series*,
Times Square,
New York, 1985
© 2010 Jenny Holzer/ARS, NY
Photo: John Marchael
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

Untitled (from *Truisms, Inflammatory Essays, The Living Series, The Survival Series, Under a Rock, Laments, and Child Text*) 1989

extended helical tricolor LED electronic display signboard

Site-specific dimensions

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Partial gift of the artist, 1989; gift of

Jay Chiat, 1995; and purchased with funds contributed by the International

Director's Council and Executive

Committee Members: Eli Broad, Elaine

Turner Cooper, Ronnie Heyman, Dakis

Joannou, Peter Norton, Inge Rodenstock

and Thomas Walthier, 1996

89.3626, 95.4497, 96.4499

Photo: David Heald

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



produced, transient text and the permanency of carved stone was a comment on the reality of our contemporary society. Holzer's artworks provoke us to think about how the way we communicate changes, both in the materials we use and in the speed at which communication is possible.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Holzer is not expressing an emotion but presenting an idea or message in an impersonal way. She is clearly aware of the power of the media and the power of words. The form of her art is unconventional — words are flashed electronically onto a light emitting diode (LED) screen. In other works she uses billboards, parking meters, stickers and T-shirts. Her works are generally referred to as **installations**.

Holzer's work provides strong political and social comment. It challenges us and makes us think. It is sensitive to human issues and inspires us to work for change. Holzer's artworks are intentionally **provocative**. An element of surprise is crucial to her work. The information she broadcasts is very different from the statements that would normally appear in these public formats. She makes us question **clichés** and how they influence our behaviour.

The use of modern technology is a characteristic of **Postmodern** art. Jenny Holzer's work falls into this category because of her content — her concern with language, the power of the media and political ideas.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Jenny Holzer began as an abstract painter, graduating in New York in 1977. Dada artists (page 193), with their strong political concerns, inspired Holzer. Her art is also influenced by the writings of a wide range of political figures. In order to convey her social, moral and political ideas, Holzer turned to using words, thus to a language-based form of art, and working in public spaces.

The work of Jenny Holzer deals with communication, often in a spectacular or unusual way. Her art is about the power of language to distort and manipulate. In 1980 she raised a massive panel in the centre of Times Square in full view of pedestrians and motorists, with the unexpected message 'Private Property Created Crime'. This message is just one of 300 from her *Truisms* series, which she began around 1977. Some of her 'truisms' are deliberately contradictory — for example, 'Everyone's work is equally important', 'Exceptional people deserve special concessions' and 'A name means a lot just by itself'. They reveal beliefs as myths and show **biases** and inconsistencies. Holzer reminds us that language is not always reliable and that a statement can be true or false according to its context.

The *Truisms* series was followed by *Inflammatory Essay* 1979. This series consisted of street posters, each a different colour and each having exactly 100 words in 20 lines.

Under a Rock, Holzer's first interior installation, consisted of a number of inscribed granite benches and electronic signs. The texts, often on unpleasant topics, have a desperate note to them: 'Crack the pelvis so she lies straight. This is a mistake. When she dies you cannot repeat the act. The bone will not grow together again and the personality will not come back. She is going to seep deep into the moss to get white and lighter . . .'

Laments was a reaction to the AIDS epidemic along with unnecessary death of any kind. It was created on 13 stone sarcophagi (coffins) and 13 synchronised LED screens.

In the 1980s Holzer experimented with television broadcasting as an artistic medium that reached a larger audience. The *War Series* 1992, on LED signs, was begun during the First Gulf War in Iraq and was installed at various locations.

Jenny Holzer is typically Postmodern in the way she tries to bring her ideas to the wider community, not just to gallery visitors. She questions the meaning and value of art and mass media. It could be said that she gives 'street credibility' to what is normally thought of as 'high culture'. **Context** is important in Holzer's art, which aims to relate the artworld to the real world. Her art appears in the form of essays, posters, T-shirts and rubber stamps, and on marble tombstones, electronic baseball scoreboards, stickers, brass plaques, the cable music video channel MTV and computerised signs, as well as in galleries and museums. In 1990 she represented the United States at the Venice Biennale. She has recently begun integrating the computer into her work and has been involved with numerous websites.

Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe dismisses Jenny Holzer's art as 'arid and trivial', arguing that her 'expensively produced slogans offered as works of art fail to generate anything like a new thought . . . [The works] pretend that difficult ideas can be reduced to simple formulations'.

Gary Watson, writing in *Flash Art* about Holzer's electronic signs in London, says, 'they greet the casual passerby with a genuinely unsettling and refreshing provocation to think'.

Michael Brenson, in the *New York Times*, suggests she 'wants to make room for thoughts and feelings that people keep to themselves and that art has generally excluded'. But, he goes on, 'there is a persistent belief that using words as visual art is intrinsically limited, and art that has to be read cannot begin to have the full, rich texture of painting or sculpture'.

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JENNY HOLZER MEDIA

Use the **Jenny Holzer media** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a biography, videos and interviews with this artist.

CRITICAL PRACTICE

STUDYING ART

Critical study

1 *Subjective Frame*

What is your opinion of or reaction to Holzer's art?

Conceptual Framework

2 Commercial galleries put certain restrictions on an artwork. Exhibiting in 'alternative spaces', Holzer has more freedom. How could this affect the content and form (the 'what' and 'how') of her art?

How could this affect the content and form (the 'what' and 'how') of her art?

Is this closer to the real world of now or the art in art galleries? Why? Which has more meaning to you — Jenny Holzer's art or the *Mona Lisa*? Why?

How does Jenny Holzer break down the barriers between 'high art' and 'popular culture'?

How has Holzer's art changed your idea of what an artwork is?

Art critics have various opinions about Jenny Holzer's art. Choose one of the statements by art critics quoted above and argue for or against it, taking into account your opinion of Holzer's art. Mention the attitude or *frame* from which the critic is writing — Subjective, Structural, Cultural or Postmodern.

Historical study

List the Postmodern characteristics of Holzer's art. You might want to do this as a single bubble map (page xvi).

FURTHER RESEARCH

How is Holzer's work similar to Barbara Kruger's? Present your answer in essay form.

ARTMAKING

Create an artwork that includes signs, symbols and text to show your personal fears and concerns.

Jacqueline FRASER

(b. 1956, New Zealand)

FORMS

photographs, mixed media

eBook plus

JACQUELINE FRASER: WORKS

Use the **Jacqueline Fraser** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this artist.

FRAME

Postmodern in her use of non-traditional media to reference popular culture and fashion magazines

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Photography has been extended by the addition of 3D collage to make direct reference to the contemporary world, having an instant appeal to the audience.

MAGIQUE/Area 51 2008

backlit photographs and mixed media

(1) 186.5 × 218.5 × 27.5 cm;

(2) 156.5 × 126 × 14.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney



CRITICAL STUDY

Jacqueline Fraser's artworks entice with the richness of their surfaces. They also remind us of the 'fakes' syndrome that is part of our contemporary society — not just the rip-off of high fashion labels but the 'fakeness' of people, and our media-driven obsession with the lives and personalities of celebrities. In *MAGIQUE/Area 51* models are dressed as twins, bedecked in demure bows at the neck yet in sexy stilettos and boots. The use of veiling and layering of fabric defines the space as well as disguising the individual faces, adding to the intrigue. There is a quirkiness to her imagery. One has to look closely to discover what areas are added to, spliced or adorned, where the real photo begins and ends, which areas are simulated textures and which are real.

There seems to be a narrative within this artwork, but the story remains elusive.

CRITICAL STUDY

In the work opposite, we recognise the Audrey Hepburn style of the little black dress, the feather hat and shoulder piece adding to the sense of sophistication. The head with its dangly diamante earrings is slightly off centre, creating a sense of seductiveness. An elaborate chandelier adds to the allure of the richly patterned material background. Fraser has us enter a world far removed from normality — the world of style queens. The four-leaf clover of the title perhaps suggests a desire for the luck to escape this way of life, or to succeed in it. Fraser creates tension between the beauty and fragility of her chosen media and the underlying mood or message she conveys.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Fraser creates a magical world — fantasy scenes that hint at, while surpassing, a *Vogue* photo shoot. Her collages are not just cut-up photographs and wallpaper backgrounds, although these are elements she uses; they have a sense of play but also an unnerving quality. The wigs, tulle, jewellery and furs not only add interesting textures and a 3D quality but suggest a searching for identity and hint at the down sides of our consumerist, label-conscious society. Little black dresses abound, while Chanel handbags, Jimmy Choo shoes and the added bling and glitter take us into a world beyond banality. The photographs of her figures are generally manipulated or mutate as if they are slipping in time, taking on different personas.

Jacqueline Fraser's witty comments on our social condition do have a serious side. She undermines and subverts the imagery of beauty and elegance with the addition of texts, signs and fake adornments. By presenting luxurious, sumptuous fabrics such as lace and brocade alongside mundane elements such as wire and ribbon, she suggests the superficiality of modern society. Loneliness and sadness are often hinted at. The figures in her exhibitions seem to be in conversation as if at a cocktail party; the conversation, we imagine, would be superficial, focusing on the self, fashion and bickering celebrities. In her 2005 exhibition, *The Ventriloquist*, fashionably dressed males, with speech bubbles of idle chatter mentioning popular anti-depressants and tranquillisers, accompanied the female figures. In her 2003 exhibition, *An Elegant Portrait Refined in Eleven Studious Parts*, she used wire armatures to form silhouettes, which she then draped with a range of fabrics, each sculpture having an extended title to convey her intended meaning.

Fraser's sculptures are harsh portraits of the society in which we live that blindly and complacently accepts violence . . . Fraser's work confronts us with political horrors clothed with the elegance of couture materiality.



***If that notorious Elizabeth Taylor devotee slips teensy four leaf clovers in her Chanel couture, baby she'll be the next big thing* 2008**

backlit photographs and mixed media
106 × 81 × 21 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

Media release from Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, 2003

STUDYING ART

Conceptual Framework

- 1 Collage as a technique began with the Cubists and Dada artists (for example the work of Kurt Schwitters). How has Jacqueline Fraser made this technique relevant to our own times?
- 2 Write a critical piece on *Magique (Area 51)* suitable for publication in the arts review section of *Harper's Bazaar*. Then write a short critical review suitable for the Art Gallery of New South Wales *Look* magazine.

ESSAY QUESTION

Several Postmodern artists have taken their subject matter and techniques from the mass media and advertising. How have two artists incorporated this influence into their artmaking? You might like to consider: Jacqueline Fraser, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Abbey McCulloch.

ARTMAKING

Create a self-portrait taking inspiration from Fraser's photography and collage techniques.

Lin ONUS

[1948–1996, Australian]

FORM

painting

FRAME

Postmodern in his use of appropriation and multicultural comments

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Onus responds to his world by challenging the preconceptions of the audience.

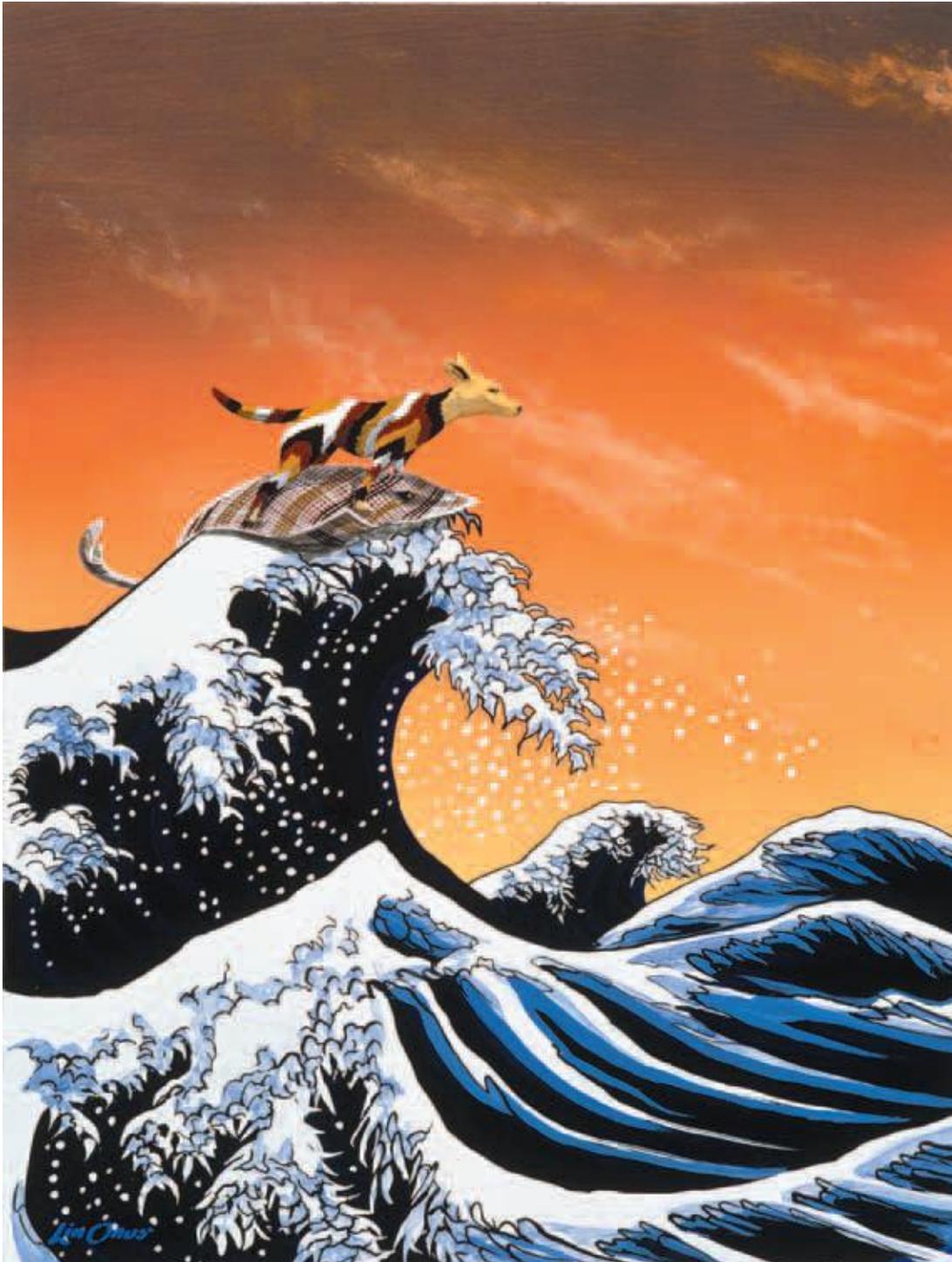
VOCABULARY

appropriation the practice of borrowing images or elements from other sources and using them in new and interesting ways to change their meaning and add contemporary significance. This Postmodern method leads us to consider the concept of originality in art and how images are altered through technological means.

eBook plus

LIN ONUS

Use the **Lin Onus** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an article about the life and works of this artist.



The work opposite could be an image printed on a T-shirt sold as a souvenir at an Australian beach resort. It has all the right elements: the flat, bright colour and patterning, the surfboard perched enticingly on a huge wave. In fact, the work is an **appropriation** of a very famous Japanese woodblock print by the artist Hokusai, shown below. We can see the resemblance, but instead of including Mt Fuji in the background and adding the traditional Japanese boats, Onus has translated the image into a humorous representation of Australian beach culture. Note how he has titled this painting. A careful look will reveal that the dingo is not riding a surfboard but a carved manta ray, painted with traditional Aboriginal crosshatching. It is a clever comment on multiculturalism in Australia and the importance of the beach culture as a symbol of Australia.

Lin Onus was the son of a Scottish mother and an Aboriginal father of the Yorta Yorta people. Onus's father Bill, who served as President of the Australian Aborigines League, was a strong and influential activist fighting for the rights of his people. He also ran a successful business manufacturing Aboriginal artefacts and souvenirs. Lin grew up in an atmosphere of political awareness that was to influence his mature works. He followed in his father's political footsteps by becoming heavily involved in the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council. He also set up an organisation to protect the copyright of Aboriginal artists (AAMA).

Onus began painting in 1974 after working in a wide range of jobs, including as panel-beater, mechanic and souvenir manufacturer, in which he learned a number of technical skills that later proved useful, particularly in his sculptural work. As an artist he was basically self-taught, and his early paintings, mainly landscapes and portraits, were produced in a realistic European style.

CRITICAL STUDY

(opposite)

Michael and I are just slipping down to the pub for a minute 1992

gouache on illustration board

50 × 38 cm

Private collection

© Lin Onus

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

HISTORICAL STUDY

Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1840)

The Great Wave at Kanagawa

From the series *36 Views of Mt Fuji*

(*Fugaku sanjuokkei*), published by

Nishimura Ejudo (woodblock print)

Private collection



Starting in 1986, Onus made regular trips from Melbourne, where he lived, to Ramingining, central Arnhem Land, gaining ideas and inspiration for his artworks on the long journey. Here he met the senior Yolngu artist Jack Wunuwun, who introduced him into the Murrungun-Djinang clan and gave him permission to use some of their traditional imagery in his paintings. Onus also integrated images from his father's people (the Yorta Yorta), from the Barmah Forest country in northern Victoria. As he studied traditional Indigenous art, he began to meld the two traditions, developing a style that was uniquely his own. He also inspired others and helped establish an urban Aboriginal art movement. Although his early work reflects his socio-political views and some degree of anger, he soon turned to humour and whimsy to communicate his ideas.

Onus's style is quite distinctive in the way he combines two interpretations of landscape, traditional Aboriginal techniques and realistic, European-style landscapes. In Aboriginal art the land is represented through stories of the Dreamtime or Dreaming. It is symbolic, spiritual, rich in patterns and observed from an aerial viewpoint. The crosshatching patterning, or 'rarrk', is used by Onus as a political statement — to signify Aboriginal claims to the land. The traditional Western interpretation of the landscape is as a 'window to the world', showing depth and atmosphere.

Lin Onus was one of the most successful and inspirational Indigenous artists of his generation. He is known for his technical expertise and his bold yet sensitive combinations of Indigenous and European art styles. At first glance the detailed realism often hides the strength of his political message. Through his art he sought to bridge the gap between urban and traditional, Indigenous and white Australia. Lin Onus was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1993. He died prematurely and unexpectedly from a heart attack in 1996 at the age of 47.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Can you see any humour in Lin Onus's artworks? Explain.
- 2 Why do you think Onus has used a dingo and a manta ray rather than, say, a Labrador dog and a shark in *Michael and I are just slipping down to the pub for a minute*?

ARTMAKING

Appropriate landscapes (both flora and techniques) from two different artworks. Before making the final decisions of your composition, try out unusual arrangements in your Process Diary (e.g. from a conventional alternating grid to floating areas of Chinese bamboo painting over an Australian Impressionist landscape).

or

Research patterns and visual symbols that represent different cultures (e.g. floral patterns on Indonesian batik, patterns on African masks, or Chinese calligraphy). Combine at least three of these to make a poster about multiculturalism.

Nam June PAIK

[1932–2006, b. South Korea, lived in the USA]

FORM

video installations

FRAME

Postmodern

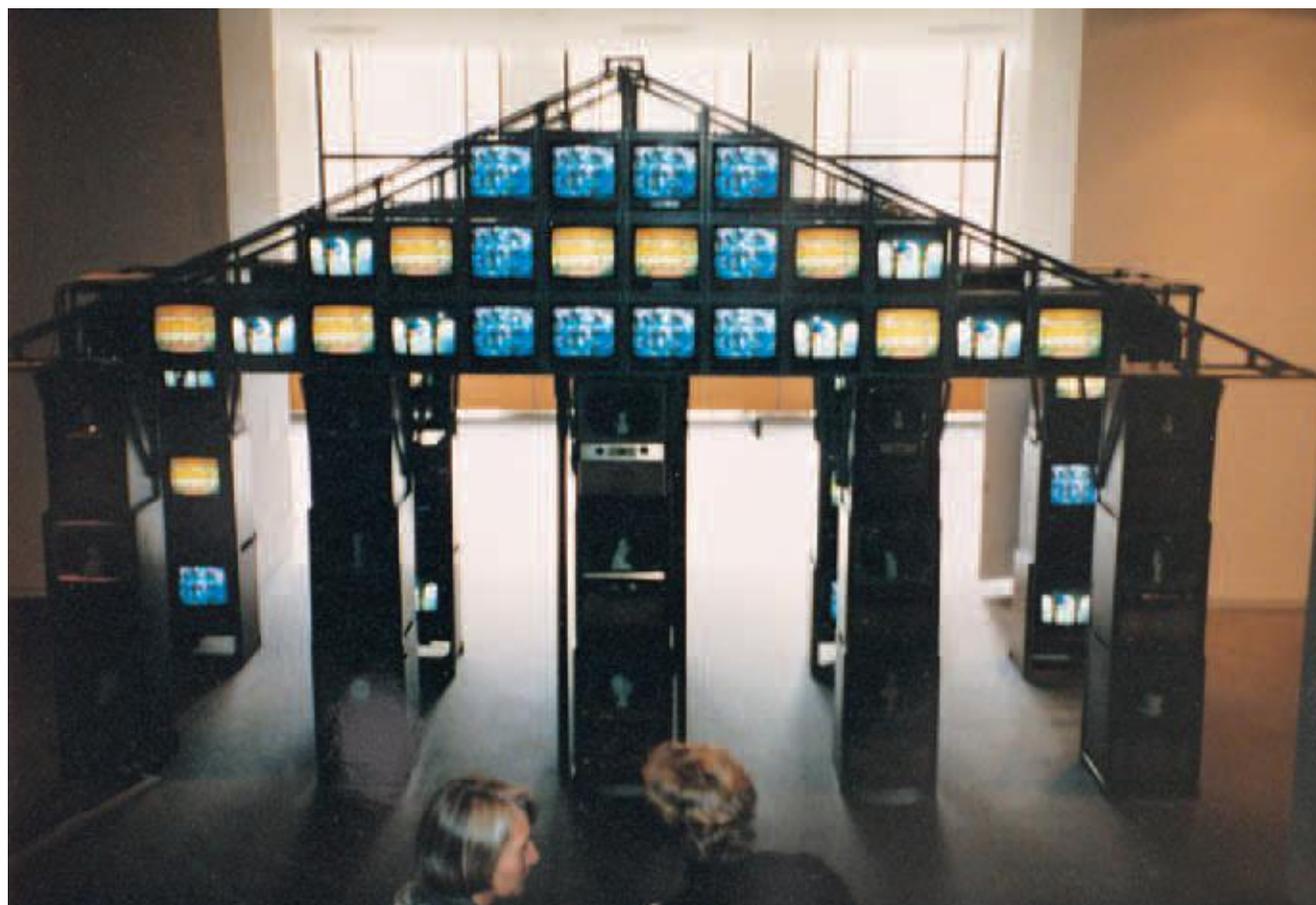
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Nam June Paik responded to the contemporary world by creating artworks that challenge the audience's perceptions and stimulate interaction.

eBookplus

NAM JUNE PAIK ONLINE

Use the **Nam June Paik** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.



Nam June Paik saw video art as a visual accompaniment to music. He also realised how he could utilise the medium of video to make comments on machines themselves. Nam June Paik used video sets as part of sculptural works, as in *Madeleine Disco* (above). He developed unique methods of manipulating the electronics as well as the images playing on the television sets. By distorting the images he disrupts the viewer's complacency in front of a television set. Video art began around 1965, when Nam June Paik made tapes with the new portable Sony video camera and screened them in New York.

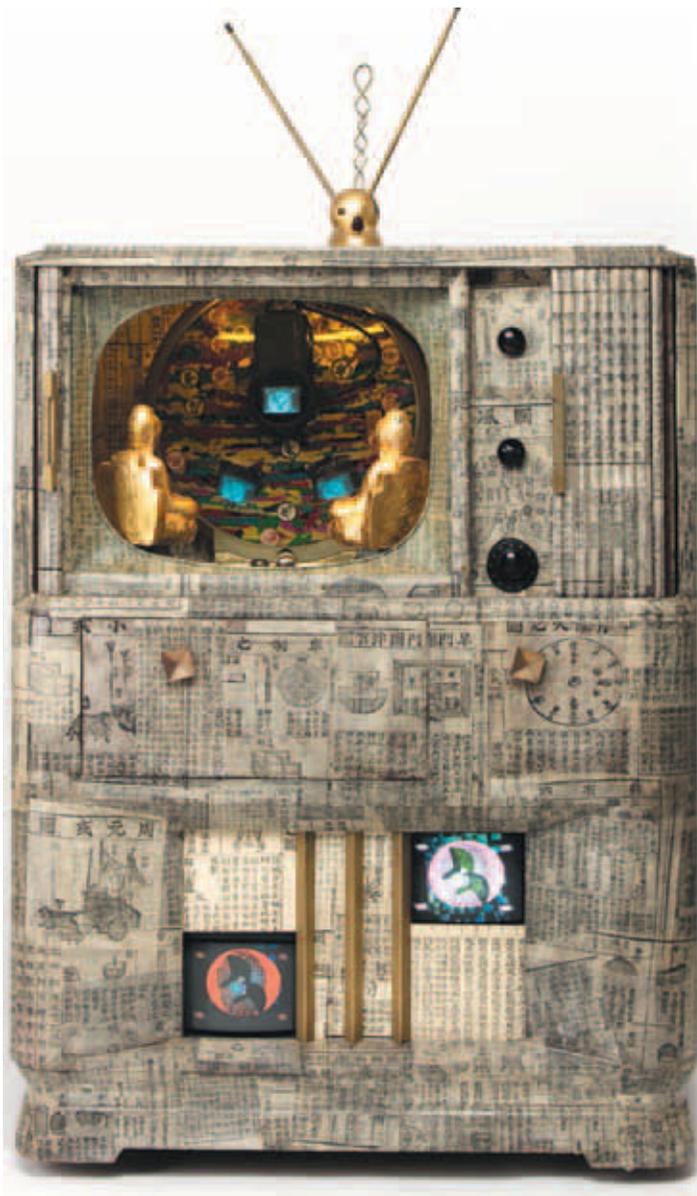
CRITICAL STUDY

Madeleine Disco 1989
two-channel video sculpture
Courtesy of the artist and
Carl Solway Gallery, Cincinnati, Ohio
Photo: Mark Patsfall

A South Korean-born composer, artist and performer, Nam June Paik was a key figure in the development of video art. He studied aesthetics and art history at the University of Tokyo and twentieth-century music and art history in Germany. In Germany, he developed as a musician and artist and met two very influential people, the performance artist Joseph Beuys and the American composer John Cage, who use the idea of chance and non-traditional instruments in their work.

Nam June Paik joined the Fluxus art group with Joseph Beuys (page 81). He first used television sets in his solo exhibition *Exposition of Music — Electronic*

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND



Buddha Game 1991

television set, pages from a printed book, 2 gold leaf wooden Buddhas, neon, antennae, 5 TV monitors, laserdisc player and laserdisc
147.3 × 92.7 × 59.7 cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales

Purchased 2002

© Nam June Paik Estate

Television in Wuppertal, West Germany, in 1963. The exhibition included three pianos, noise-makers and thirteen altered television sets. This has been claimed as the world's first exhibition of video art. His 1984 work *Good Morning, Mr Orwell* was the first video piece to be broadcast by satellite.

To Paik, the sculptural aspect of his works was just as important as the images running across his screens. His works link sound, moving images, objects and technology. In his 'video robot' series, such as *Family of Robot* 1986, he also hints at the links between the evolution of humankind and technology. He said that he was fascinated at the time with the notion that the human brain grew only after humans started walking upright.

He was also interested in the concepts of time and memory and the spontaneity that video allowed him to explore. His *Fin de Siecle II* 1989 included 201 television sets and four laserdiscs. A videotape of images and sounds played simultaneously on all the sets. His work is often humorous, particularly when he makes fun of television itself. He also questioned society's use of technology.

Paik developed multiple projection devices, which made it possible to represent the sensation of the chaotic and often random images that compete for our attention in the contemporary world. With electronics engineer Shuya Abe, Paik developed a device for image manipulation and colorisation called the Paik/Abe synthesiser.

Video art is one of the new technologies of Postmodern art. With it, a new type or form of art has been created. Video art questions the idea of the artwork as something static and permanent. It also permits the involvement of the audience.

STUDYING ART

- 1 What do you think Paik was trying to say in his work *Buddha Game*?
- 2 How does video art help us to understand our world?

Discuss the following as a class or in groups.

- 3 In 1958 the German artist Wolf Vostell used TV monitors in an installation and stated: 'The video set is declared to be the sculpture of the twentieth century'. How did video art challenge past ideas of what was acceptable as art? Did it mean the 'death' of canvas painting?
- 4 Video art began as an alternative to film. Developments have included combining video monitors in installations, using the video as an interactive device with the viewer controlling what is seen and, more recently, using computer graphics. Discuss how you would define video art and whether you think it will endure as an art form in the future.

FURTHER RESEARCH

eBookplus

Use the **Nam June Paik works** weblinks in your eBookPLUS to view more works by this artist.

FORMS

video projections;
installations;
multimedia works

FRAME

Postmodern

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The viewer has the feeling of being watched. Hill is purposely attempting to upset the audience's expectations. The viewer is led to reassess the process of looking.

VOCABULARY

body language physical movements and postures that communicate non-verbally our feelings and attitudes
disorient unsettle, confuse
projective recorded video that is projected onto a wall or other surface

eBook plus

GARY HILL ONLINE

Use the **Gary Hill** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.



Around and About (detail still) 1980
video (colour, sound); 4 min. 45 sec.
Courtesy of the artist and Donald Young
Gallery, Chicago

What we see in the video *Around and About* are quick flashes of close-up images of taps, chairs, door and windows — the mundane items of our existence — but the dialogue accompanying the images holds our attention as we try to find meaning, not just in the images but in relationships and existence itself: ‘I’m sure it could have gone another way . . .’, ‘Maybe it is my fault . . .’, ‘I don’t want to threaten you . . .’, ‘I’m coming from a disconnected place . . .’

This is a poetic exploration of the interrelationship between image and language. Gary Hill’s works, influenced by the writings of philosophers, contain layers of meaning, triggering ideas in the mind of the viewer, at times bringing out deep-rooted emotions.

Watching the video *Tall Ships* (page 70) is an unsettling experience. Life-size people stand in front of you, looking at you. Some appear shy, others confident. You are aware of the tilt of their head, whether they have trouble looking at you directly, and their hesitancy before they turn and walk away. You almost believe that these human beings are in the room with you, even though they are slightly out of focus, as if in a dream. The importance of silence becomes apparent. The silence creates a haunting mood, allowing us to focus on the **body language**.

We relate to some of the figures more than others, not just based on their age and appearance but based on their personality. We think about our unconscious responses to other people. The way a person relates to a total stranger in intimate

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY

eBook plus

IMAGE, BODY, TEXT

Use the **Image, Body, Text** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an interactive multimedia feature on selected works by Gary Hill.

Tall Ships 1992 (detail)

mixed-media installation
16 modified 4-inch black and white
video monitors with projection lenses,
one IBM-compatible computer with
16 RS-232 control ports and variable-
length concealed switching runners,
controlling software, 16 laserdisc players
and 16 laserdiscs.

Edition of two and one artist's proof

Photo: Mark B. McLoughlin

Courtesy of Donald Young Gallery, Chicago



eye contact (although the soft focus prevents a direct confrontation) depends on the personality and experiences of the viewer.

Hill's work is often set in a room that at first is in complete darkness. This is meant to **disorient** the viewer. In *Tall Ships* 1992, you enter a long, completely dark, corridor-like space. Sixteen black and white images of people of varying age and cultural background and different gender are projected onto the walls. One is also projected at the end of the corridor. The figures are first seen at a distance, but as the viewer advances, the images appear to walk forwards until life-size. As the viewer moves on, he or she activates the advance of another figure. Thus the figures react personally to the viewer's presence.

Crux 1983–87

five-channel video/sound installation
5 20-inch colour video monitors,
4 monitor-mounting brackets, 5 speakers,
five-channel synchroniser, 5 laserdisc
players and 5 laserdiscs (colour, mono
sound)

Dimensions as installed:

approx. 365 × 365 cm

Edition of two and one artist's proof

Photo: Cary Markerink

Courtesy of the artist and Donald Young
Gallery, Chicago



HISTORICAL STUDY

Gary Hill's video works are essentially concerned with the play between images and language. He is commenting on the communication systems of human beings (language, eye contact). The human body emerged as a major component in his video installation *Crux* 1983–87. In this artwork, Hill attached video cameras to his own body to record the movements of his feet, hand and head as he wandered through the ruins of a castle then dived into a lake. The 'journey' symbolised the suffering of life itself, the dive into water representing death. These recordings were played on five video monitors in the shape of a cross on a stark white wall.

From 1987 Hill's installations became **projectives** involving a recorded video that is projected onto walls or other surfaces. His works create unique, often disorienting experiences for the viewer/participant. With *Beacon* 1990, life-size figures were projected to take over the space itself. His work from 1990 to 1993, including *Tall Ships* and *Learning Curve*, challenged the significance of the spoken word. Instead of speech, he emphasised the body itself and its physical presence as a means of communication.

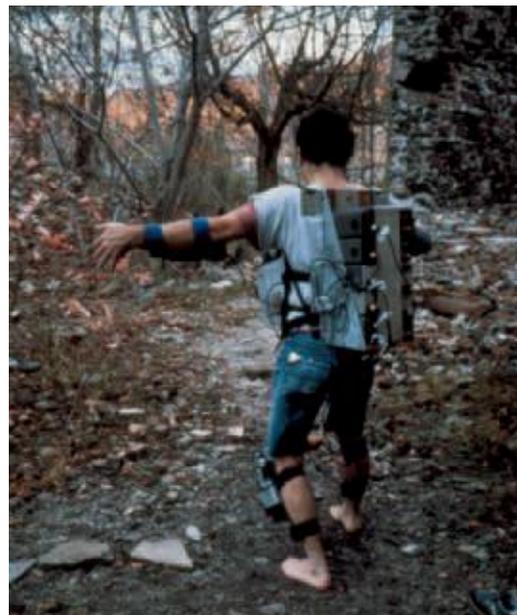
In 23:59:59:29 — *The Storyteller's Rooms* 1998, Hill used strobe lights. Moving, non-distinguishable images randomly disrupted the darkness as they were projected on walls. At the same time, words and phrases ('making up for lost time', 'between slippages' and so on) were heard intermittently, starting, pausing and starting again. This added to the viewer's unease and to the feeling of mystery.

All Hill's works are essentially concerned with the fascination of seeing. His work questions viewers' sense of where they are and what they are seeing.

Artist's statement

'I happened to see an old photograph taken in Seattle around 1930 of a "tall ship" . . . I immediately associated those huge masts and full sails with people standing, like the people I was working with. The thought of that kind of ship on the high seas — that frontal view of extreme verticality coming towards you — there is a majestic quality to it that when applied to the human figure projects a kind of power and grace. That person, however vulnerable, will come forth no matter what. It is the simplicity of the idea — humans approaching humans in a space of a work that is always slightly haunted by the notion of "ships passing in the night".'

Extract from interview with Regina Cornwell, quoted in G. Quasha and C. Stein, *Tall Ships*, Station Hill Arts, Barrytown Ltd, New York, 1993



Production still from Gary Hill's *Crux*, 1983–87, at Bannerman's Island, Hudson Highlands State Park, New York, 1986

Photo: Ulam Curjel

Courtesy of the artist and Donald Young Gallery, Chicago

STUDYING ART

Critical study

1 Subjective Frame

How do you think you would feel standing in front of Gary Hill's *Tall Ships* video?

Cultural Frame

2 *Student activity: roleplay.* In groups, one person stands then one by one the others rise from their seats and come close to the person standing, pause, look but do not speak then return to their seats. Afterwards, instigate a discussion about what has occurred, how they felt. Did they wish to speak, smile? Did they turn and walk away, or did they continue to look? Did they find it hard to keep looking into the standing person's eyes?

3 Hill chose the individuals in his work *Tall Ships* randomly from family, friends and friends of friends. Their movement is fairly uniform — the only variations are pausing halfway, or coming back a second time. How would you rewrite this script to make a strong cultural statement?

Postmodern Frame

4 'Hill's work is Postmodern in that it challenges our notions of seeing and responding to people.' Explain this statement with reference to *Tall Ships* and *Crux*.

5 'Hill's work is Postmodern in its use of unconventional or non-traditional media.' Explain this statement with reference to *Tall Ships*.

6 How does Hill's choice of medium make his work appeal to a wider audience than the frequent art gallery visitor (who has a strong background of art knowledge)?

eBookplus

Use the **Gary Hill videos** weblink in your eBookPLUS to view more of this artist's videos.

Historical study

7 Historical writers often seek to explain the development of an artist's work. In the historical explanation of Hill's work, what did you understand to be Hill's main subject or concern?

8 Statements from the artist are valuable sources of information about the artist's inspirations, intentions and working methods. What understanding have you gained about Gary Hill's artistic practice from reading his statement?

ESSAY QUESTION

Cultural and Postmodern Frames

Discuss the work of two video artists who use their art to comment on issues of contemporary society. Other possible video artists include: Pipilotti Rist, Shirin Neshat, Mariko Mori, Cao Fei.

ARTMAKING

Create an artwork about the notion of meeting people and the different ways of interacting or avoiding contact — for example, a glance, a facial expression, an acknowledgement in a crowd, or the way we purposely ignore people in a cinema, on a bus or passing in the street. It could, for instance, be in video form or involve projections over drawings.

FORM

video, installations

FRAME

Postmodern

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

With Rist as 'actor' in her videos, there is a close relationship between artist and artwork. The world on which she comments is current mass media.

eBookplus

PIPILOTTI RIST ONLINE

Use the **Pipilotti Rist** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of this artist.

Pour Your Body Out (7354 cubic meters)

2008

multichannel video (colour, sound), projector enclosures, circular seating element, carpet

Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York and Hauser & Wirth



CRITICAL STUDY

Pour Your Body Out has similarities to an earlier work, *Sip My Ocean*, in that it is a fragmented narrative. Involving the body in a fantasia of nature, the colours rich, the imagery lush, Rist creates her own unique vision, an entwining of figurative and abstract elements. Rist uses video to exploit the most beautiful and expressive components of life.

CRITICAL STUDY

Gravity, Be My Friend (opposite) seems to take over the whole exhibition space, being the entire downstairs gallery of Magasin 3, in Stockholm. On entering, the viewer is immediately involved, and this engagement continues as they walk around or lie down within the space. Two large video screens are suspended over the 'sculptures' of carpet, their layered contours suggestive of islands, strategically placed for the viewer to rest on in order to become mesmerised by the video, which consists of a collage of intense, brightly coloured images of a red-haired woman diving, moving around and walking amongst lush vegetation and seascape. The images overlap in a rhythmical slow motion in a dreamlike merging of fragmented images and sound. The soundtrack adds to the calming effect as we slow down to match the rhythm of the images. This evocative work appeals to the senses, allowing our thoughts to drift away into private associations of experience and the subconscious.

HISTORICAL STUDY

In the early 1980s Pipilotti Rist studied graphic design and photography in Vienna then video at the School of Design in Basel, Switzerland. She entered art through pop music, having played in bands for several years. She also designed stages for local bands and directed their videos. Rist became aware of the gap between high art and popular culture, of the class war between book-reading intellectuals and those brought up on pictures through television, magazines and computers.



In her works, Pipilotti Rist attempts to address prejudices and habits of behaviour. She does this through her emotional and often sensual videos and installations, their strength being in their wit and brevity, which ensure wide accessibility and understanding. She deals with femininity, identity, power relations, sexuality and embracing life. In *I'm Not the Girl Who Misses Much* 1986, she playfully wiggles and dances around the screen. She is interested in celebrating the body and the senses rather than making a feminist statement about male versus female power. She embraces hysteria as a strategy of letting go of emotions and sees emotional outbursts as something positive. However, we can see a link to the sexism of television music clips. Postmodern artists want the viewer to interpret according to their own experiences and values. Her large-scale video projections are concerned with taking pleasure in the physical and an innocent, playful approach to breaking down boundaries.

In *Ever Is Over All* 1997, Rist provides images that can be interpreted more meaningfully than text (as in a written story). A young woman runs down a street cheerfully smashing car windows while a second projection shows a field of flowers. A policewoman appears and warmly greets the young woman. Rist shows the madness of unsolved daily problems, but she does so in a lighthearted way. She tries to involve the viewer in a variety of ways, through playing with spatial possibilities of the screen itself or through showing rooms inside rooms. In *Yogurt on Skin — Velvet on TV* 1994, she placed tiny monitors inside handbags and seashells, which showed images such as brightly coloured sea scenes or a

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Gravity, Be My Friend 2007
audio video installation by
Pipilotti Rist: 2 projectors pointing
to the ceiling, 3 players, 1 sound
system, 2 wild carpet sculptures,
2 screens
Sound by Anders Guggisberg and
Pipilotti Rist
Image courtesy of the artist,
Luhring Augustine, New York, and
Hauser & Wirth

toe spotted with blood. In *Sip My Ocean* 1994–96, shown at the Sydney Biennale 2000, Rist is seen cavorting in a beautiful, enchanting underwater world of brilliant coral and seaweed. At the same time, household objects such as a bright yellow teapot and a plastic toy truck drift slowly to the sand, creating a lyrical quality. There is a hypnotic and dreamlike feel to the work. The accompanying soundtrack is of Rist's version of a Chris Isaak song, 'Wicked Game', which at times adds to the dream-world sensuality and at others disturbs the illusion as Rist goes into a high-pitched squeal. Water is a recurring image in several of her videos, including *The Mechanics of Fluids* 1996. Rist, however, claims that there is no one subject in her artmaking, but rather her subjects are overlapping and she is more interested in universal feelings. A work such as *Closet Circuit* 2000 may come out of conversations and desires or arrive by chance, or it may develop from an earlier work. Rist always aims to create something that is socially relevant, but she avoids clichés and negative elements such as cigarette smoking, masks, intrigues, weapons and hatred. In 2000 Rist projected a series of nine one-minute video projections onto the Panasonic Screen in Times Square, New York, exploring her fascination with emotions in a project that has been called 'advertisements for feelings' that combine commercialism and high art.

Rist often performs the central role in her videos as well as producing and shooting them. She also performs (playing percussion, bass and flute) in her all-woman rock band Les Reines Prochaines (The Next Queens), as well as being involved in The Rist Sisters Corporation, which deals with unique developmental and production works in many disciplines. She has recently been working on a feature film.

Artist's statements

On the influence of Nam June Paik (p. 67),
quoted in Phelan, Obrist and Bronfen,
Pipilotti Rist, Phaidon, 2001, p. 16)

'Paik's work and mine have in common that we both try to draw the viewer inside it. At first you look at the box, at the screen or projection, but when you concentrate on the sequences you feel as if you're inside the box, behind the glass, within the wall. You forget everything around you and concentrate completely on the box: you're swallowed. This can be achieved in many different ways, for example through the number of monitors or the size of the display, through the installation and its choreography. Paik managed to rid himself of this suspicious box in many different ways; he'd transform the TV monitor into a lamp or place it inside an aquarium, Reconquering the space inside the TV set: that's one of my aims as well.'

Quoted in Phelan, Obrist and Bronfen,
Pipilotti Rist, Phaidon, 2001, p. 16

'It was through my interest in mass media that I became involved in art. In return, I will always be grateful to popular culture.'

Quoted in *Flash Art*, vol. 41, no. 263,
November–December 2008, p. 66

'I regard video as moving paintings, behind glasses or caressing away walls. Since the third dimension is lost in film you must make it up with the quality of the composition of the images, with rhythm and with sound and music.'

STUDYING ART

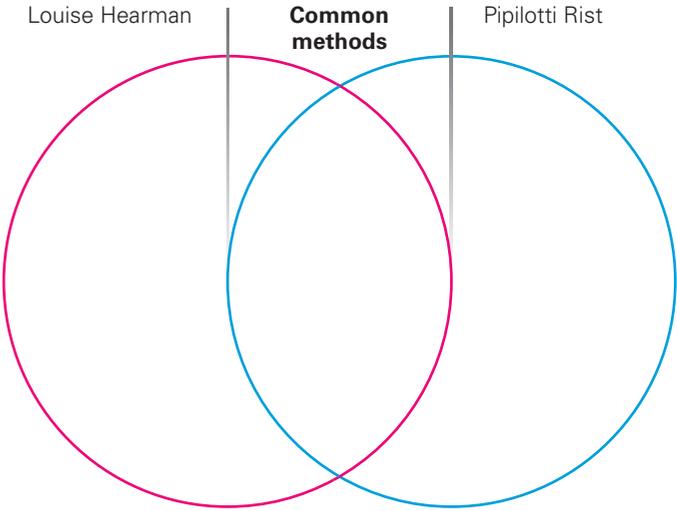
Critical study

- 1 Describe your view of the relationship between the body (Rist) and the background (environment) in the video still on page 72.
- 2 Rist has stated that she has been influenced by Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono, John Lennon and Nam June Paik. What similarities do these artists have and how might they have influenced her work?
- 3 Find a sentence that evaluates her methods/techniques or use of media (*Structural Frame*).
- 4 How is Rist's work commenting on or influenced by contemporary society (*Cultural Frame*)?
- 5 What do you think video art can achieve that cannot be achieved in a painting?
- 6 What makes Rist's work Postmodern? (How does it challenge past forms of art?)

SHORT ESSAY QUESTION

Conceptual Framework

Both Louise Hearman and Pipilotti Rist employ 'dreamlike' imagery, enticing the audience to be involved emotionally. How do their methods of engaging and mesmerising the audience differ? You might like to organise your thoughts first by using a Venn diagram.



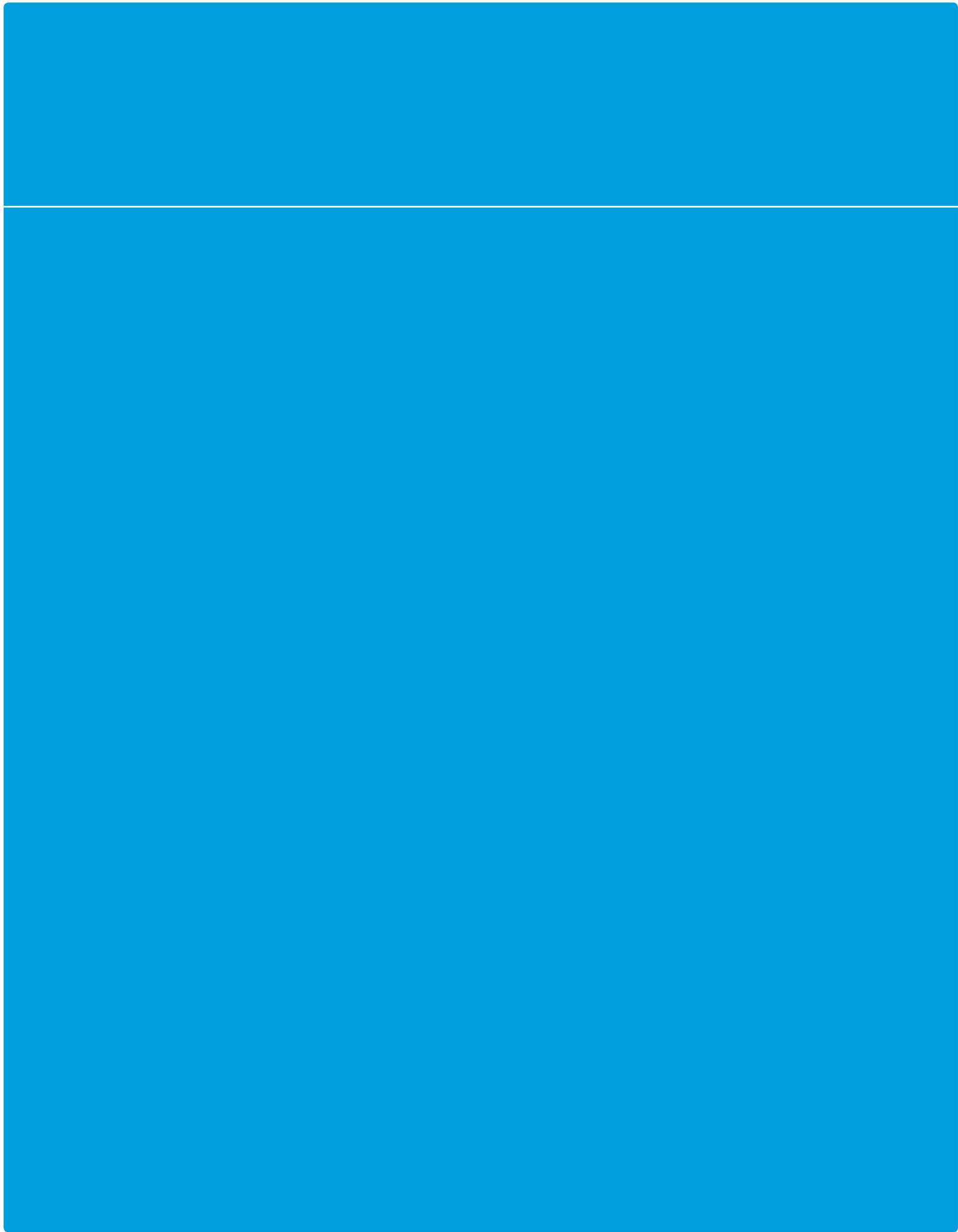
ARTMAKING

Design a performance work involving yourself in a natural environment. Present it as a storyboard or 'picture script' that explains the action taking place. Consider how you could alter normal aspects of time and space for emotional effect or social comment.

FURTHER RESEARCH

eBook plus **PIPILOTTI RIST ONLINE**

Use the **Pipilotti Rist: works** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read more about the video art and artist's practice of this artist.



CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 5

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

LIST OF ARTISTS

Book of Kells p. 79
Joseph Beuys p. 81
Christo and Jeanne-Claude p. 83

eBook *plus*

INTERACTIVITY:

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2190

Art is attuned to world events and to changes that determine and are determined by the way people think. Artists express values that are explicit in their daily rituals as well as in their dreams and aspirations. But the views of dealers, patrons, exhibition organisers, curators and magazine editors are also a part of the artworld. Artists are a part of society, not autonomous and isolated. This is why it is important, as is reflected in the New South Wales syllabus, to consider the relationships that exist between the agencies of the artworld, broadly grouped as Artist, Artwork, Audience and World.



Christo and Jeanne-Claude
Surrounded Islands
Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida, 1980–83
Photo: Wolfgang Volz
© Christo 1983

FORM

illuminated manuscript

FRAME

Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Artist: Illuminated manuscripts were individually painted by monks. Many monasteries were founded in Ireland during the medieval period.

Artwork: Their purpose was to tell religious stories as an aid to prayer. By elaborately decorating these books, the monks were creating objects worthy of God's teachings. *Illuminated* means both 'decorated with colour or gold' and 'to enlighten'. A manuscript is a book or document written by hand. The *Book of Kells* and other medieval texts were handwritten documents that were elaborately decorated in order to enlighten people about the Christian Gospels. At first the initial letter of a chapter was decorated, then some whole pages were illustrated. Most of the Latin text was written in dark brown ink. Over time the decoration grew to be a more prominent part of the manuscript, including elaborate borders; finally the first letter took over a whole page.

Word: These artworks reflect the society of the time, including its religious teachings and values. The monastic system played a vital role in upholding and conveying learning and artistic skills. In illuminated manuscripts we see the importance of symbols in communicating meaning and the influence of pagan (non-Christian) Celtic design. 'Lacertines', decorative interlacing that often incorporated fantastical animal forms, were part of this influence, as were curving, entwining plant designs. Decorative images of peacocks, lions and snakes were symbols of Christ's resurrection. The motif of the cross featured on most pages as a reminder of the Crucifixion.

Art critics play a major role in the modern artworld by offering interpretations of and informed opinions on artworks. We turn to art historians to investigate artworks from the past, to guide us on how to interpret the symbols used, to explain how the works were made and the values they represented, and to place the works in a meaningful historical and cultural context. Art historians often provide information on the purpose of the artwork and on the culture that produced it.

Art historian's statement

'The *Book of Kells* represented an enormous commitment in terms of time and precious resources for the monastic community. The manuscript is written on vellum, which was made from calfskin. It took about 185 skins to make the required amount of vellum for this deluxe Gospel book. There are 680 pages in the *Book of Kells* but probably another 60 pages, including major decorated pages, were lost over the millennium. The scribes used quill pens made from the tail feathers of the swan or goose.'

Extract from Felicity Mahony, 'The Book of Kells: Picturing the Word', in *Craft Arts International*, no. 49, 2000, p. 88

Audience: Illuminated manuscripts provided a visual language for the illiterate. Modern audiences view them as precious art objects — beautiful, stylised, finely crafted decorative works that help us understand the culture of the medieval period.

The *Chi-Rho* page from the *Book of Kells* is an excellent example of the use of vivid colour and exquisite geometrical patterns in Celtic book design. The *Book of Kells* is one of the finest surviving illuminated Christian manuscripts. In its intricacy there is great beauty. The decorative designs, for the initial letters at the start of each chapter and the borders as well as the full-page illustrations, helped to communicate religious feelings and ideas. The initial page shown here marks the beginning of the chapter containing the Gospel of St Matthew. It is a fine example of decorative design.

The *Portrait of St John* is a stylised (simplified, stiff) portrait of the saint. He sits awkwardly in the chair, his feet spread wide rather than pointing forward. His robes have lines to represent the folds, but no shading, making them more

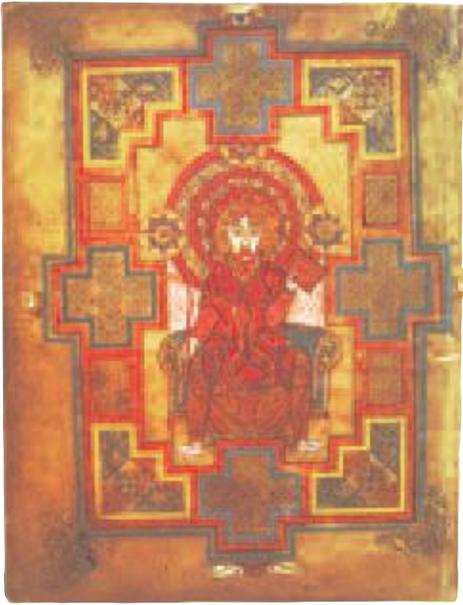
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BOOK OF KELLS
MANUSCRIPTS

Use the **Book of Kells manuscripts** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore geographically categorised manuscripts of this artwork.

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY



(above)

Portrait of St John (page preceding the Gospel of St John) c. AD 800
vellum
Collection: The Board of Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland



(right)

Chi-Rho (initials of Christ's name)
c. AD 800
MS 58 fol. 34r
Gospel of St Matthew,
chapter 1 verse 18,
Irish, vellum
The Board of Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

decorative than realistic — they do not suggest the solidity of the body beneath. The hair and beard have also been treated in a flat, linear way. The eyes stare straight ahead. St John is shown with an exaggerated quill pen, a symbol of his role as author of the Gospel.

This is a simplified, decorative and symbolic representation of a person. Realism was not required as these illustrations were created to represent a religious symbol rather than to portray an individual's likeness or personality.

STUDYING ART

Conceptual Framework

- 1 Artwork:** In the *Portrait of St John*, why do you think St John is holding a book?
- 2 Artwork–audience:** Most members of the congregation in Ireland during the ninth century could neither read nor write, and their only language was Gaelic. Only the monks could read the Latin text. How do you think these books would have been used in the church service? Why would their decoration have been important?
- 3 World:** In what century were these manuscripts produced and to which historical period do they belong? List some of the symbols used in the *Book of Kells* and their meanings at the time.
- 4 Artist–artwork:** Describe the method and materials used by the artist monks to create an illuminated manuscript.

ARTMAKING

Decorate your initial with symbols from your contemporary culture. This could be a digital work or a silkscreen print suitable for a T-shirt.

FORMS

sculpture, installation

FRAME

Subjective owing to its personal nature, and the artist's feelings and memories explored

VOCABULARY

mysticism spiritual beliefs often unrelated to formal religious doctrine

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Artist: The artist's life experiences are the main subject of his artworks, in which he is the principal 'performer'.

Because of World War II, Beuys did not become a professional artist until he was in his forties. He became one of the most influential European artists, the first postwar German artist to gain international recognition. Like Salvador Dali and Andy Warhol, Beuys exploited publicity to define his role as an artist and his own identity. His sleeveless fishing jacket and grey fedora hat (a trilby made from felt), which he never took off in public, became his trademarks.

Beuys believed that the process of living is itself a creative act and that every human being is an artist. Rooted in his personal experiences and traumas, his main artmaking themes were healing, regeneration and enlightenment.

Artwork: Beuys explored the idea of artists as actors — not just part of the artmaking practice but part of the artwork. Emotion and the artistic process became more important than the artwork itself.

Two materials, animal fat and felt, became emblems of healing and magic for Beuys, and he used them in many sculptural and installation works. For example, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, has in its collection Beuys' *Felt Suit* 1970. (See it also at: www.walkerart.org/beuys/hyper/index.html.) This seemingly mundane costume, simply displayed on a hanger, symbolises Beuys' personal history and concerns. Fat, fur, copper rods and sulfur became symbols in his work of an energy force or **mysticism**. Animals such as rabbits and coyotes were also used in his works for the power and mysticism they represent in some cultures. For *Coyote* 1974, the artist, wrapped in felt, lived in the art gallery in Düsseldorf for several days with a wild coyote. Music played in the background while Beuys told his tale. The coyote urinated on copies of the *Wall Street Journal*. Pieces of fur, fat and other props used during his performances became relics of the events. His performances were also documented in photographic form by fellow artist Ute Klophaus.

World: Beuys was for a time part of Fluxus, an international network of artists, designers and musicians that arose during the 1960s. Inspired by the Dada movement of the 1920s, Fluxus was a political/social movement that used street spectacles, concerts, postcard collages and electronic music to communicate its avant-garde ideas and social values.

Joseph Beuys' artworks reflect his personal experiences. According to Beuys, in 1943, during World War II, his fighter plane was shot down over the Crimea in Soviet Russia. It was the last of five near-fatal crashes. Badly injured and near death, he was dragged from the snow by Tartar nomads, who treated his wounds with traditional methods, coating his unconscious body in animal fat and wrapping him in felt. When he recovered, he believed this near-death journey had changed him into a *shaman*, a magic figure who, in northern Asian cultures, is said to travel beyond the grave, usually with an animal, and bring back healing powers from the spirits.

Audience: The audience was challenged by the non-traditional artworks of Beuys. Performances that included the artist himself ensured that the audience was involved on a personal level. At times audience involvement was deliberately limited. On the opening night of *Explaining Pictures to a Dead Hare*, the invited audience found the gallery doors closed, but through the glass they could see Beuys, his face covered in honey and gold leaf, sitting on a chair cradling a dead hare. He eventually got up and wandered around the exhibition as if explaining it to the hare.

Beuys created meaning from his manipulation of materials. It is difficult to analyse his work from only one example, as each is a part of his total output, building on the meaning of the whole. Each work reflects his personal

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JOSEPH BEUYS

Use the **Joseph Beuys** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and art of this artist.

CRITICAL STUDY



I Like America and America Likes Me

1974

Week-long action with coyote at René Block

Gallery, New York

Courtesy of Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

Photo: Caroline Tisdall

© Joseph Beuys, 1974/Bild-Kunst.

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

experiences and ideas. Beuys' performances were complex and emotionally moving. In *I Like America and America Likes Me*, the felt cape represents protection for the body against the cruel outside world. The felt itself reminds us of this material's use as insulation in buildings. Made of compressed matted animal fibres, felt is a material that is very basic to life. The flexibility of felt also appealed to Beuys. The artist is acting out his own experiences and fears, stimulating the viewer to consider their own memories and reactions to situations.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Subjective Frame, Conceptual Framework: artist–artwork

- 1 How is Beuys' work an expression of his life experiences?
- 2 List some of the symbols in Beuys' work along with their meanings or associations.
- 3 Artists often paint self-portraits as a means of self-discovery. How are Beuys' artworks a type of self-portrait?
- 4 *Cultural Frame, Conceptual Framework: artwork*
Beuys called himself a 'social sculpture'. What do you think he meant by this?

Postmodern Frame, Conceptual Framework: artwork

- 5 Art has traditionally involved the skill of the artist in creating a precious, beautiful or meaningful object, such as a painting or sculpture. How did Beuys change the idea of what an art object is?
- 6 What new forms and materials did Beuys make acceptable?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Historical study

Beuys' work has extended the use of the readymade in art (research Picasso's collages and Duchamp's sculptures). Explain Beuys' incorporation of the readymade in his artmaking.

ARTMAKING

Create a proposal for an installation that includes found objects and aims to explore an incident or interest in your life.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude

(born in the same hour on the same day in 1935, Christo Vladimirov Javacheff in Bulgaria and Jeanne-Claude Denat de Guillebon in Morocco; they lived in the United States — Jeanne-Claude died in 2009)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The world: When Christo and Jeanne-Claude temporarily alter the landscape, we look on it with new eyes. Their project near Sydney, *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, Australia, 1968–69*, gave a huge stimulus to the art community in Australia, breaking previous boundaries and opening up possibilities for local artists. Highly publicised and controversial, it remained in place for only seven weeks, with the site then returned to its original condition.

The art object: Christo began by exhibiting wrapped sculptures, taking the concept of the readymade one step away from reality, adding a sense of mystery and teasing the audience's perceptions. This idea of hiding and revealing became central to the couple's later projects. Their projects are funded entirely by Christo and Jeanne-Claude themselves. The saleable part of their artmaking practice is solely Christo's preparatory drawings and collages and funds from the sale of his early works of the 1950s and 1960s. The artists accept no commercial sponsorship, charge no admission, and receive no income or royalties from sales of films, photographs, posters or books.

The artists: Christo and Jeanne-Claude pay a large crew of workers to construct their projects. They are very determined artists. Permission for the project to wrap the Reichstag building in Berlin took 24 years of negotiation and campaigning to secure. Their pleasure is in seeing their concepts realised and in 'building works of art of joy and beauty for themselves and their collaborators, first of all, and for all to enjoy for free' (quoted on the website www.christojeanneclaude.net).

The audience: Christo and Jeanne-Claude lead the viewer into new ways of seeing, feeling and questioning. Weather effects — such as the movement of the fabric by the wind or the transparency created by different effects of sunlight — create visual surprises for the viewer. The cliff face at Little Bay appeared to be a living, breathing entity, a thing of great beauty. They generally employ local skilled mountaineers and engineers on their projects, as well as non-skilled paid workers (labourers and students), so for some the experience of involvement is a very personal one.

In 1998 in the town of Riehen, Switzerland, 178 trees were wrapped with 55 000 square metres of translucent, woven polyester fabric and 23.1 kilometres of rope. The wrapping began on November 13, was completed on November 22 and was removed on December 14. The materials were recycled. The project had taken 32 years to eventuate.



FRAME

The work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude can be classified as being from the *Postmodern Frame* as it challenges the traditional role of the artist and what an artwork is, as well as the role of the art museum. It is also in the Postmodern style in its use of non-traditional media and audience participation.

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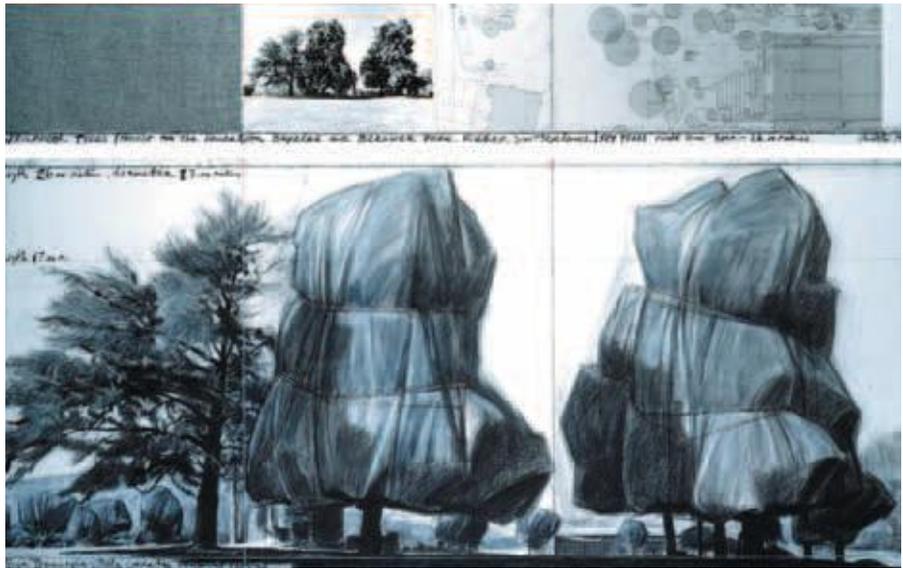
CHRISTO AND
JEANNE-CLAUDE
ONLINE

Use the **Christo and Jeanne-Claude** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the official website of these artists.

CRITICAL STUDY

Christo and Jeanne-Claude
Wrapped Trees
Fondation Beyeler and Berower Park,
Riehen, Switzerland, 1997–98
Photo: Wolfgang Volz
© Christo 1998

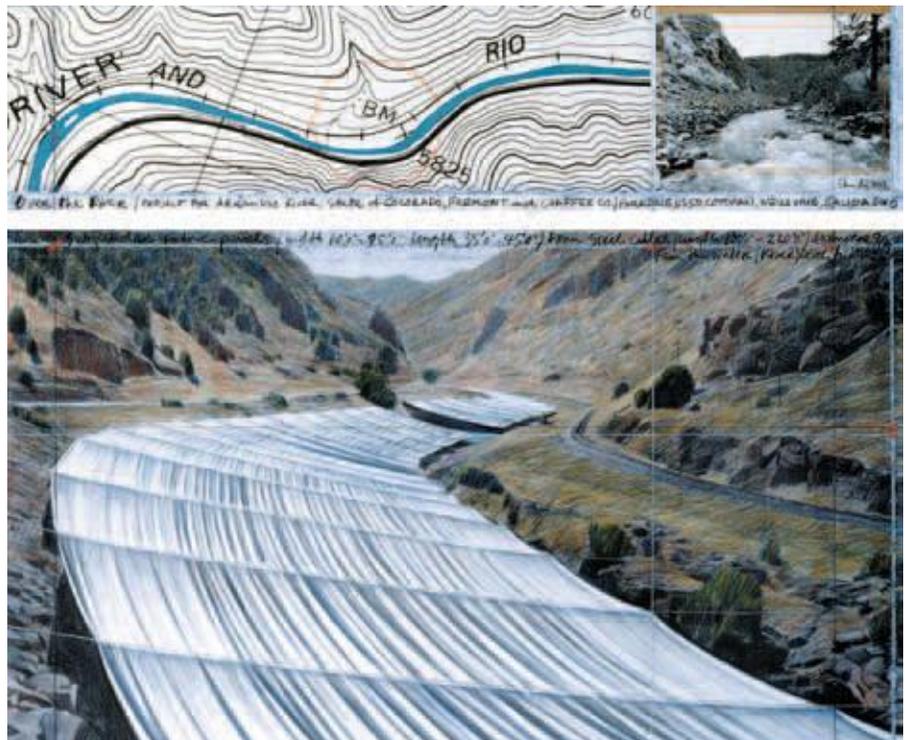
Christo
Wrapped Trees Project for Fondation Beyeler, Berower Park, Riehen, Switzerland
 Collage 1997 in two parts: 30.5 × 77.5 cm and 66.7 × 77.7 cm
 pencil, fabric, twine, pastel, charcoal, wax crayon, topographical map, fabric sample
 Photo: Wolfgang Volz
 © Christo 1997 ref. #5



Above is one of the preliminary 'collage drawings' created by Christo in the planning stage. These drawings become the saleable art object, the proceeds from their sale going to future projects. The artists do not accept sponsorship of any kind.

CRITICAL STUDY

The choice of location was crucial to the aims of the *Over the River* project. The artists wanted to make the work accessible to many, so they sought a gently curving river with a road on one side and railway tracks on the other. A long stream of fabric panels, suspended horizontally high above the water level, will follow the changing course of the river. Steel wire cables anchored in the higher riverbank will cross the river to support the panels. The audience will be able to view it from either side of the river or experience it more directly by canoeing under the transparent 'veil' suspended above the river. From kayaks below, the changing shadows of the clouds will add to the experience. As is often the case in their projects, major considerations include light and shadow and the way the movement of the wind creates new forms and surfaces.



Christo
Over the River
 Project for Arkansas River, State of Colorado
 Drawing (2007) 35.2 × 38.7 cm
 pencil, pastel, charcoal and wax crayon
 Photo: Wolfgang Volz
 © Christo 2007



Christo and Jeanne-Claude
Surrounded Islands
Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida, 1980–83
585 000 square metres of fabric floating
around 11 islands
Photo: Wolfgang Volz
© Christo 1983

Christo and Jeanne-Claude were a husband-and-wife partnership of collaborative artists. (Jeanne-Claude died in November 2009.) Their art involves temporarily altering a site — natural or built — by wrapping or surrounding it with material. They have ‘wrapped’ many natural features as well as built structures of cultural significance, such as the Pont Neuf bridge in Paris, the Reichstag building in Berlin and the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Their artworks are site-specific in that they are designed for a particular place.

They first came to Australia in 1969, following an invitation by John Kaldor to create an artwork here. The resulting project, *Wrapped Coast*, used 90 000 square metres of polypropylene erosion control fabric held down by 56 kilometres of rope to wrap a section of coast at Little Bay just south of Sydney. The rocks, the cliffs, the surf and the wind all became part of the artwork.

For *Surrounded Islands*, in Biscayne Bay, Miami, Florida, frangipani-pink polypropylene fabric was floated around 11 islands in the bay. The islands had been used mainly as dumpsites — the artists’ workers removed 40 tonnes of rubbish before beginning the project. The cost to the artists of creating this artwork was \$3.1 million. The sewing of the fabric so it would follow the contours of the individual islands took five months. Christo and Jeanne-Claude transformed the islands into a daring work of great and delicate beauty. The work has been

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

CRITICAL STUDY

compared with Monet's waterlily paintings. It received prime-time exposure on television networks and was widely reported in newspapers. Tourists flocked to the area. The *Orlando Sentinel* (17 April 1983) reported: 'In Miami, pink used to mean flamingos, sunsets and art deco hotels. Now it means Christo'.

Other well-known projects include *The Valley Curtain*, *Running Fence* and *The Umbrellas*.

Many of their environmental and civic art projects remain no more than sketches and environmental and engineering studies for years until permission is granted, sometimes after a change in local government. Thus they often worked on more than one project at a time, sourcing locations and making models, which undergo extensive testing.

Their works are created on a grand scale, involving many people in their construction and watched by thousands more, as well as being recorded by the media. The art of Christo and Jeanne-Claude is essentially public art, created for all the world to see and enjoy, affording intense and memorable experiences of art outside museums.

Artists' statement

'The temporality of a work of art creates a feeling of fragility, vulnerability and an urgency to be seen, as well as a presence of the missing, because we know it will be gone tomorrow.

'The quality of love and tenderness that human beings have towards what will not last — for instance, the love and tenderness we have for childhood in our lives — is an additional aesthetic quality we want to give to our work.'

Press communiqué for *Wrapped Trees*, Riehen, Switzerland, 3 December 1998, www.christojeanneclaude.net/wt.shtml

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CHRISTO AND JEAN-CLAUDE INTERVIEW

Use the **Christo and Jean-Claude interview** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an interview with these two artists about their work and process.

STUDYING ART

Critical writing

- 1 'Christo is the tease of the artworld. As he packs and drapes furniture, bridges, public buildings and bits of the countryside, he uses wrappings and veils as provocatively as a stripper. When he wraps, he reveals — and through that revelation he provokes a response. The bigger the response — whether it be laughter, outrage, curiosity, contempt — the more it fuels his creative energy.'

Valerie Lawson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Good Weekend', 8 September 1990, p. 29

What type of language and techniques has the critic used to gain our attention and interest in Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work? (*Note*: At the time they worked under the single name 'Christo'.)

2 Conceptual Framework — Postmodern Frame

What is Christo and Jeanne-Claude's role as artists? How is this different from what you normally consider the role of the artist?

- 3 How does the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude raise questions about what an art object is? Consider that the actual physical artwork often exists for only a few weeks.
- 4 How do these artists work sympathetically with the environment?
- 5 Do a PMI on the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude to clarify your understanding of their work (page xv).

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS' PRACTICE

CHAPTER 6

CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS' PRACTICE

LIST OF ARTISTS

Drawing

Laith McGregor p. 90
William Kentridge p. 93

Painting

Michael Johnson p. 96
Ben Quilty p. 99
Kathleen and Gloria Petyarre p. 103
Abbey McCulloch p. 107

Digital — photography/video/virtual

Darren Sylvester p. 110
Mariko Mori p. 114
Cao Fei p. 117

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INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2191

Drawing

The process of drawing heightens our awareness and refines the way we perceive. Drawing is a useful tool for recording observations as well as expressing emotions. It is an excellent way to record ideas and sensations, to develop concepts and explore experiences. Through drawing we can investigate relationships between objects and people, document facts or history, and establish associations. The process of drawing can be initiated from the intuitive, emotive, subconscious side of the brain or from the methodical, intellectual and innovative side. A drawing can be an artwork in itself but is also a creative planning tool that can lead to further explorations in other media. Some of the visual qualities associated with drawing are gestural mark-making, contour, proportion, tone, volume, pattern and texture.

Painting

Painting offers a wide range of styles and techniques that require the development of technical skill. The surface quality is important. Whether using acrylics, encaustic or oil paint, the method of applying the paint (using a variety of sizes and styles of brush, palette knife, airbrush, squeezed straight from the tube, blended with fingers, dry brush or blended wet on wet) is important; the effect can be enhanced by the use of a range of mediums — for example, impasto thickens the paint while a flow medium extends it.

Digital — photography/video/virtual

Artists are increasingly using digital means to create their artworks. Annette Bezor uses traditional painting techniques but employs the computer to help organise her compositions, which allows her to play with various layers. Others, like Darren Sylvester, use photographic techniques, employing digital tools to enhance or make fine adjustments to the image. Gary Hill and Pipilotti Rist work in video for its inherent characteristics — the ability to alter time, change focus, add sound and generally involve an audience in a more inclusive way. Cao Fei took digital art one step further when she moved from video art into the realm of the virtual world. Video is closer to the reality of the contemporary experience than other forms of art. In 2009, for the first time, a video artist was awarded the prestigious Blake Prize for religious art, testimony to the growing status of digitally created art.

Printmaking

George Baldessin p. 120
Salvatore Zofrea p. 123
Rew Hanks p. 126

Sculpture/Assemblage

Mona Hatoum p. 129
Shona Wilson p. 132
Alasdair Macintyre p. 136
Alexander Seton p. 139

Architecture

Glenn Murcutt and Phillip Cox p. 142
Rem Koolhaas p. 145

Printmaking

The advantage of printmaking is that multiple copies can be made. The run of copies is called an edition. In most printmaking a line drawing is created through transferring ink from a screen, plate or block onto a surface such as paper. Tone can be added through multiple lines or a textured surface (as in an aquatint with etching).

Different types of printmaking are:

- monoprint — working directly from a surface
- relief (lino, woodblock or collagraph) — the top layer is the area printed
- intaglio — engraving, drypoint or etching, including solar etching; damp paper is pushed into the grooves by pressure to 'pick up' the ink
- serigraphy — using stencils or screen printing.

Sculpture

Sculpture can take many forms, from minute, intimate pieces to large-scale works allowing audience interaction. The main methods are carving, casting, modelling, constructing and installation.

Architecture

Architects need to consider not only the aesthetics (visual appeal) of their designs but also their function and relationship to site. Contemporary architects strive to be innovative both in design and in their use of materials and technology.



Shona Wilson
Sea Pelt II 2000
assemblage
Photo: Greg Weight
Courtesy of the artist and Michael Nagy Fine Art

FORM

drawing

FRAMES

Structural in the control of line;
Subjective in the imaginative approach

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is a close relationship between the artist and the imagery he draws.

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ELESSON: INTERVIEW WITH LAITH MCGREGOR

Laith McGregor offers insights into his work and inspiration. A transcript of the full interview is also available in your eBookPLUS.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES-0726



Ride to Nowhere 2008

biro on paper

56 × 76 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

CRITICAL STUDY

In *Ride to Nowhere* there is the feeling that the figure is playing a role, in this case a male stereotype, yet the cheeky look on the face and the fanciful way the hair flows off the page suggests a mythical figure. The fine detail and realism of the face, hands and the bike created by his skilful use of biro as a drawing medium makes us first see this as merely a competent realistic portrait, but the change in colour and viewpoint and the way the hair flows beyond the page suggest another level of interpretation. There is the hint of a subconscious longing to be a hero or fictional character.

CRITICAL STUDY

The beard once again seems to be the focal point of Laith McGregor's imagery in *Helm of the Rambut Pura*, this time not quite engulfing the figure, a self-portrait. A pair of thongs and a hat hint at the reference in the title. Is he off to Bali for a holiday? The sense of absurd or offbeat humour becomes even more apparent



[above]
Helm of the Rambut Pura 2008
 biro on paper
 149.5 × 177.0 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

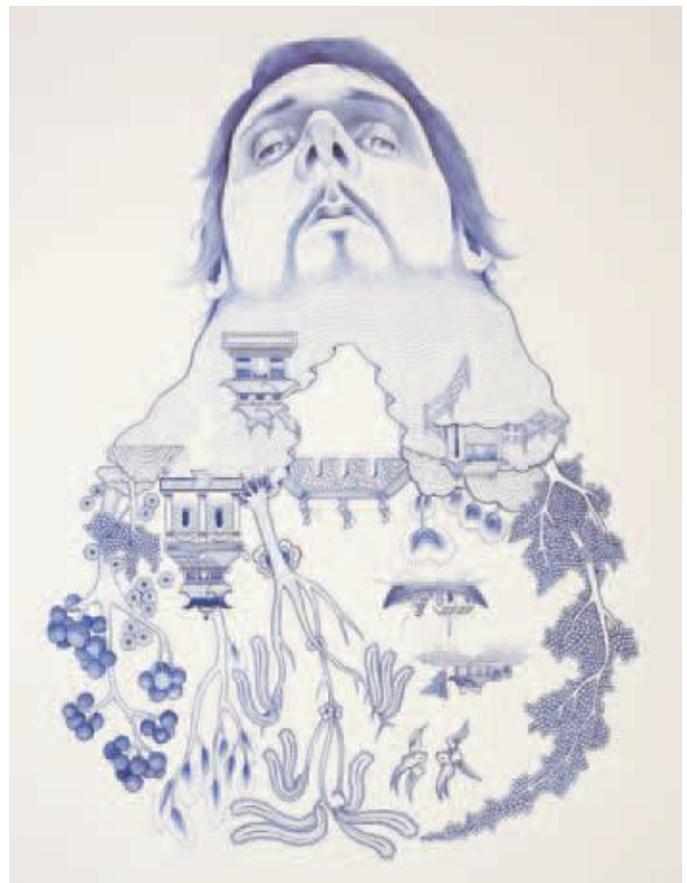
[right]
Dream'n about a Place I'll Never See 2009
 biro on perforated paper
 76 × 56 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

when we delve a little deeper into his symbols. He is indeed referencing Bali, in fact a sixteenth-century Hindu temple, the Pura Rambut Siwi, which is known as 'the temple for worshipping hair'.

Laith McGregor
 combines illusion

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

with realism. The 'characters' of his portrait drawings combine factual details from personal family stories, fictional hero worship and the subconscious dream world or imaginary friends of a highly developed imagination. His artworks seem to hover between realism and fantasy. They make us think about identity, disguise and how we present ourselves to the world.



McGregor works within the tradition of realistic, fine-detailed line drawing, but he has created an individual style through his choice of drawing instrument and the quirkiness of his subjects and compositions. They are distinctive for reasons beyond the recognisable signature of wild, luxuriant beards.

Laith McGregor has won the Robert Jacks Drawing Prize and a Qantas award for the encouragement of Australian contemporary art, for which he received \$13 000 plus \$10 000 in air travel. Laith McGregor was included in the 2009 MCA exhibition *I Walk the Line: New Australian Drawing*.

Artist's statement

'The work around the idea of hair as a metaphor has been a preoccupation of mine for a little while now. Initially I was interested in the dandy and the absurdity of masculinity. I was using the hair as a projection of a possible prosthesis to bolster a male authenticity. After working with this idea, I have come to realize the other significances hair can possibly hold and the connotations it can project. I mean, facial hair was, is and always will be an important periodic motif of the human persona. Funny thing is I can't stand hair, I really can't!'

Quoted in *Art Collector*, issue 47, January–March 2009

CRITICAL PRACTICE

'There was nary a soul in the crowd who was inclined to refute the selection of Laith McGregor's work *Balloon Beard* as the righteous winner of the \$5000 2008 Robert Jacks Drawing Prize at the Bendigo Art Gallery last year . . . It is a strange work, to be sure. A Rasputin-like portrait of a balding man with a flourishing, robust — indeed absurdly massive — growth of facial hair, it is surreal in the extreme. It is also intense, the man's eyes glaring from the surface of the picture. It is also odd in that it is rendered purely in blue biro, a common Bic to be precise.'

Art critic Ashley Crawford, quoted in *Art Collector*, issue 47, January–March 2009

'Laith McGregor uses a blue ballpoint pen to draw with the technical prowess of an old master. But instead of classical nudes or heroic portraits, he sketches strange hirsute men. In *Hex*, the big beards of six decapitated dudes join together to form a star, like a badge of honour for men with facial hair well out of control.'

Tracey Clement, 'No nudes is good news', *Sydney Morning Herald*, Metro, 1–7 May 2009

STUDYING ART

- 1 Experiment with drawing with a biro to identify the different effects and limitations of using a ballpoint pen compared with pencil or charcoal.
- 2 Write your own critical analysis of *Dream'n of a Place I'll Never See*. How does it make you feel (*Subjective Frame*)? Describe his shading techniques, viewpoint, composition and symbols (*Structural Frame*). What meaning do you think he is trying to communicate through the title?
- 3 Laith McGregor uses a traditional art technique to create contemporary images. Ah Xian (page 46) also uses traditional techniques. How does their choice of medium and skilful technique add to the meaning of their work?
- 4 In his critical review of McGregor, Ashley Crawford writes that his drawing is 'surreal in the extreme'. Look at the Surrealist artists Dali (page 200) and Magritte (page 203) and explain why you think Crawford has used the term 'surreal' in regard to Laith McGregor's art.

ARTMAKING

Draw a self-portrait using blue biro, attempting to learn from the technique of Laith McGregor.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1 How are Laith McGregor's drawings different from the expressive drawings of Brett Whiteley, Joy Hester or Craig Ruddy?
- 2 What similarities do you find between the drawings of Laith McGregor and the work of the Old Masters such as Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Dürer or Rembrandt? You might like to organise your thoughts by first using a Venn diagram (page xviii).

eBook plus

LAITH MCGREGOR: WORKS

Use the **Laith McGregor** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this Australian artist.

FORMS

drawing, animation
through drawing

FRAME

Cultural — commenting on racism in South Africa

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kentridge reacts to his world, creating a new art object — animation developed through drawing and the process of erasing.

eBook *plus*

WILLIAM KENTRIDGE: FIVE THEMES

Use the **Five Themes** weblink in your eBookPLUS to watch a video of William Kentridge discussing his early ambitions in life.

The animated sequences in *Stereoscope* are the result of the unique and painstaking process by which he creates charcoal drawings then erases and redraws certain areas. Remnants of the first drawing can still be seen, giving a sense of time passing and of movement. The subject matter is the turbulent, violent period of late apartheid (race-based oppression) in 1980s and early 1990s South Africa. He uses two central fictional characters, Felix and Soho, exploring their daily lives to suggest broader ethical and moral issues. Soho is shown as the white, business-suited factory owner; Felix is the naked, vulnerable struggling actor and dreamer who represents European influence in South Africa. Through these two characters Kentridge tells the sombre story of what happens when two people share the same land but belong to different cultures. His characters are oppressors, witnesses and victims. Mining debris and the blood of its black inhabitants scar the barren South African landscape. The films were a nine-year project.

CRITICAL STUDY

Drawing from the film
Stereoscope 1999
charcoal and pastel on paper
95 × 120 cm
Courtesy of the artist and The
Goodman Gallery, South Africa





Tide Table 2003
 animated film, 35 mm film, video and DVD
 transfer with sound
 8:53 min.
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South
 Wales
 Purchased 2005
 Accn no. 134.2005

CRITICAL STUDY

This film features Kentridge's 'character' Soho, a ruthless industrialist, seen here falling asleep beneath his newspaper. In an unfolding dream, the calm sea begins to rage, the deckchair moves, cattle appear, are drowned or slaughtered. The process of the drawing, the erasing of the charcoal and the redrawing, dividing time into simple graphic sequences, seems as important as the narrative told.

Artist's statement

'[My] drawings don't start with a "beautiful mark". It has to be a mark of something out there in the world. It doesn't have to be an accurate drawing, but it has to stand for an observation, not something that is abstract, like an emotion.'

Quoted in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, *William Kentridge*,
 Société des Expositions du Palais de Beaux-Arts de Bruxelles, 1998

HISTORICAL STUDY

William Kentridge was born in Johannesburg to a white South African family. He continues to live and work there today. He had a non-traditional education that included theatre and drawing as a teenager and philosophy and politics in college. These studies and his life experiences have come together in his art, which offers a distinctive and personal history of South Africa, in particular the legacy of apartheid and colonialism. His focus is on the complex and often violent history of South Africa, in particular the effect its past will have on its future. His drawings reference the power of the bourgeoisie in South Africa and the influence they have on the lives of everyday people, but his work carries universal messages about the nature of human emotions and memory.

Kentridge's work is dramatic, emotional and disturbing. His art is political in that he holds up contradictions, ambiguities and gestures to stimulate the viewer's responses to what he sees as the effects of a brutalised society, yet he is neither totally optimistic nor without hope. Kentridge acknowledges the importance of the response and interpretation of the viewer; he has said that powerful or good art depends on a sympathetic audience.

William Kentridge is internationally renowned for his animated films, drawings, etchings, sculptures and film. He worked in theatre for many years, initially as set designer and actor, and more recently as director. His short film *Medicine Cabinet*, which at first appears to be an outdated black and white cartoon, is actually built around the process of metamorphosis. In his charcoal drawings one everyday object is transformed into another — a birdcage into a kitchen cupboard, say. Since 1992 Kentridge has been involved in multimedia pieces using live actors alongside puppets and animation, creating magical theatrical productions complete with eerie soundtracks. The three-quarter life-size wooden puppets are carved from his drawings. In *Day for Night* 2003 Kentridge films the 'drawings' made by ants crawling across paper lined with sugar that when printed in the negative suggest visions of the galaxy.

Kentridge's primary focus and starting point for his films has always been drawing. He uses a restricted technique of large-scale charcoal works with touches of pastel, generally of just one pastel such as blue. Although he uses a traditional drawing technique, he combines this with time-based art practice of the twenty-first century, thus bridging the gap between art of the past and of the present.

'One of the fascinating things about William Kentridge's films is how they let the process show. Because he draws, shoots, erases and shoots again to create his imagery — rather than painting animation cells or digitally developing scenes — I am conscious of his means, even his touch. It is Kentridge's genius to show how the directness of drawing could survive the indirectness of a camera-based art.'

Janet Koplos, 'William Kentridge', *Art in America*, December 2000

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

CRITICAL PRACTICE

STUDYING ART

- 1 Write your own analysis of *Soho Crying or Tide Table*. Consider drawing technique, composition and use of perspective, line and tone to create mood and meaning.
- 2 Read the artist's statement carefully. What do you learn about Kentridge's approach and intention in his drawings? What can you learn from this statement about how to begin your own drawings?
- 3 We live in a world where images can be quickly copied and mass produced through digital reproduction, photocopying and so on. How do Kentridge's methods convey a sense of the artist's touch, of originality, of the past and of change?
- 4 How does this technique add to the meaning of his films? (Refer to the critical review in your answer.)
- 5 Summarise William Kentridge as an artist by using a single bubble map (page xvi).

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create a large charcoal drawing of an issue you find disturbing or a problem you have — perhaps an argument with someone, something you fear or even an everyday issue such as having to share your bedroom. Like Kentridge you could add just one colour as an accent. Think of a title for the drawing. A cluster map can help you identify and explore your ideas and various ways of showing them.
- 2 Try Kentridge's method of suggesting a change in time by completing a drawing of someone or something (for example a cat) involved in an action. Partly rub out parts and redraw to suggest that a movement has taken place. This could be put together as a mini flip book. On completion, write an evaluation of your artwork in your Visual Arts Process Diary. Reflect on the skills you have demonstrated, how your ideas evolved, the decisions you made, your success in suggesting movement and what you could improve.

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Structural, Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Artwork–world–artist. This unit considers the artwork as an object and symbol, a representation of wider world issues of art theory and the concept of abstraction. Quotes from the artist help us understand his intentions.

eBookplus

MICHAEL JOHNSON: WORKS

Use the **Michael Johnson** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this Australian artist.



Two Fold 2008

oil on linen

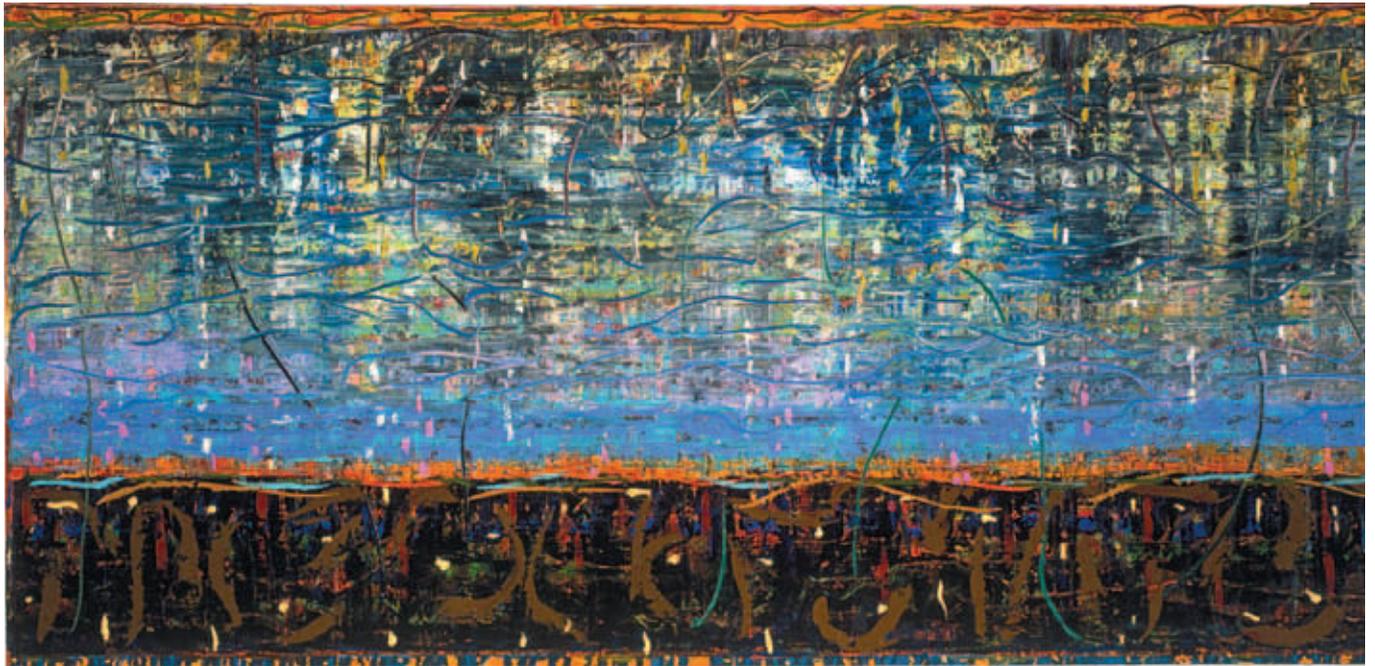
153 × 122 cm

Courtesy of Tim Olsen Gallery

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

CRITICAL STUDY

A subterranean underwater cavern and the life it contains inspired this painting. *Two Fold* suggests the mysteries of the depths, flashes of light within the darkness. The canvas is divided into uneven bands, which imposes a sense of rhythm as well as suggesting water areas versus rocky caverns. The curving horizontal overlay of lines relates to the ripples or life pulses in water, while the red vertical dashes create a sense of sinking. This painting illustrates Johnson's use of colour not only as a visual tool but to construct meaning in an artwork.



The bottom layer of *After Sirius* has a strength and sense of weight, the middle conjures up reflections and ripples in water, the top 'line' creates a formal structure or boundary for the work, its orange hue repeating the top edge of the brown layer, setting up a rhythm in the painting but also hinting at a sunset. The lines are both drawn into the thick layers of paint as well as sitting on top in rich squirts from the paint tube. This painting attests to Johnson's skill with oil paint. It is a painting of opposites: the surface from a distance seems meditative yet up close it becomes riotous. Behind its expressive spontaneity is an underlying plan.

CRITICAL STUDY

After Sirius 1987–1988

oil on Belgian linen

213.0 × 457.5 × 4.0 cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales

Purchased with assistance from the Moët & Chandon Art Acquisition Fund 1988

© Michael Johnson

Accn no. 130.1988

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

Michael Johnson uses thick layers of paint to build up his rather chaotic surface of smeared and scraped-through paint with overlays of lines. The colours are not random but divide the canvas into horizontal bands. The flowing lines create a surface rhythm, suggesting movement in nature such as ripples in water.

Johnson's work appears spontaneous and expressive but in fact there is an underlying structure and order built on the discipline of his methods developed over years of painting experience. He generally works on two paintings at a time, usually over a period of about three months. He begins the process by applying paint with a brush, gradually building its structure with colour. Then comes the palette knife to add the textural layering, while tubes of paint are squeezed on to create the ribbons of line, the artist working from intuition within a fixed plan. His surfaces are animated, reminiscent of natural forces at play — rippling wind and gentle waves.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Artist's statements

Structural Frame

'I'm an abstract artist. I think in an abstract way. That's why I'm so hard to talk to,' he explains, chuckling.

Subjective Frame

'I'm inspired by phenomena like the refraction on a beetle's wing or the colours of the night sky. My eyes are open all the time. With all my paintings I am trying to freeze my experiences.'

The artist, aged 71, interviewed by Elissa Blake, in 'I don't want to talk too much art talk; puts people off', *The Hot Seat*, Arts and Entertainment, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16–17 May 2009

CRITICAL PRACTICE

John Olsen, exhibition catalogue,
Michael Johnson, New Paintings, June 09,
Tim Olsen Gallery

Edmund Capon says of Johnson, 'He's a robust, boisterous person who likes to grab life by the scruff of the neck. And his work is truly a reflection of him. The paintings demand attention. They are a visual symphony. All those straggly lines are filled with his thoughts, experiences and feelings. He's a very emotional person and the intensity of his emotion is squeezed out of the tube and onto the canvas.'

Elissa Blake: 'They look spontaneous but the work is underpinned by a mathematical method, with each section of the painting measured in counts or bars, like a piece of music.'

'In Michael Johnson's work there is no restraint in providing a spontaneous view by which nature is completely spectral. Despite the fact that the viewer tries to interpret the notions of horizon, or a point by which the water meets the land, the basic structure of his painting and geometry in the work is essentially a play with space, depth, and emotion.

Johnson's ambiguous and omnipresent markings have a permanence. Constantly changing, the work is in a metamorphic and mutable cycle that possesses transparency and movement, and transforms the preconceptions of landscape into an alluring and intriguing playground. We are immersed into blazing light or a nocturnal malaise...the sensuality of Johnson's colours, with rivers and inlets carrying splashes of topaz, alizarine, and cadmium, with deep, descending and dissolving verticals of light. Voices of night and water, or day and light entice a legacy as to how he feels the metaphysical world, whether they evoke harbours or the land's edge. These paintings release a visual and emotional experience, with no fixed eye, that invites us to be part of his resonant spirit and place.'

STUDYING ART

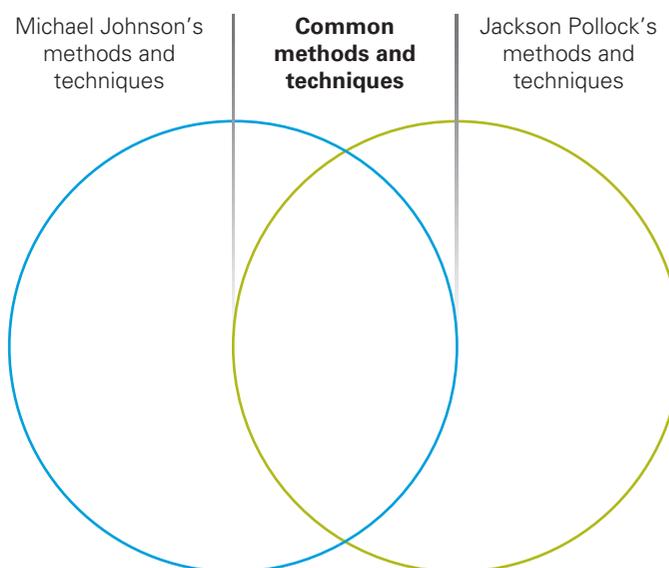
- 1 Write two sentences interpreting Michael Johnson's paintings from the *Subjective Frame* and two sentences explaining his work from the *Structural Frame*.
- 2 Describe how Johnson achieves depth in his paintings.
- 3 Art critics offer their opinions about artworks, often using descriptive and poetic language to enhance their writing. Find one word or phrase that is unfamiliar to you in the critical review by John Olsen, look up its dictionary definition and use it in a sentence about one of Michael Johnson's paintings.

ARTMAKING

Create your own abstract painting of a landscape.

FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1 Michael Johnson's son Mathew is also an abstract painter. Research and analyse their artworks to find similarities and differences in approach and technique, in particular describing the way they each animate the surface through colour.
- 2 Analyse and compare the working methods and techniques of Michael Johnson and the American Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock. You might like to use a Venn diagram to help your thinking.



FORM

painting

FRAMES

Postmodern in the way he challenges conventions in his choice of subject matter, aesthetics and technique; *Cultural* — for instance, the Torana is a symbol of Sydney Western suburbs male aggression.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

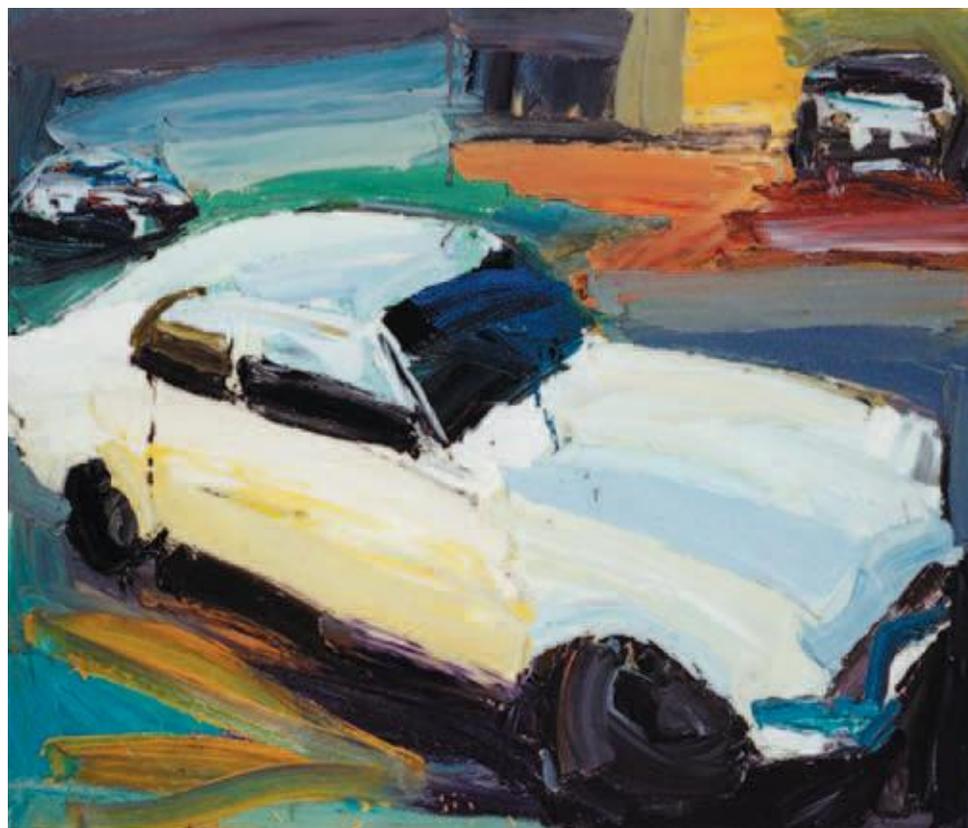
Quilty responds to the world of his youth as well as his present world, creating traditional art objects of oil paint on canvas, yet his technique is far from traditional. Despite their large size, his works attract the viewer on an intimate level.

eBookplus

AUDIO: BEN QUILTY — SURVEY SHOW

Ben Quilty gives an insight into his survey show, his life and his art.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: AUD-0002



Elwood Torana No. 7 2003

oil on canvas

120 × 140 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Grant Pirrie Gallery

Quilty's choice of subject is deliberate. He draws on his own past, referencing an aggressive love of speed and the pranks of a suburban youth subculture through symbols of masculinity, risk taking and freedom. Quilty is interested in the rituals of self-initiation. The Torana car was the ultimate dream car for Sydney teenagers, being cheap, easy to fix with minimal mechanical knowledge, fast and sculptural in shape, a symbol of manhood. But beyond the significance of the subject, which challenges the viewer to contemplate notions of culture and identity, we appreciate Quilty's work for its own materiality, its luscious tactile surfaces and use of colour.

Quilty generally works in broad strokes of rich, creamy impasto paint. There is a hint of aggressiveness in his vigorous brushwork.

The work on page 100 is one part of a three-part series. He has used one painting to transfer a smeared or blurred imprint onto another canvas, suggesting a certain loss of strength of character in the process. This method is similar to that used to create the ambiguous Rorschach 'blots' once used in psychiatry to trigger associations. According to Quilty, 'When you crush

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY



Jimmy Barnes — *There but for the grace of God go I* 2009

oil Rorschach and aerosol on linen
two panels, 190 × 280 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Grant Pirrie
Gallery

it together, you destroy the likeness so it's almost a glorification of decline' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 2009, p. 3).

In his youth, Quilty was a fan of rock singer Jimmy Barnes. In this work he examines how the singer's fame has affected his past and present public and private 'face'.

So the painting is about celebrity, but also the private, dark side of the life, and the whole Rorschaching thing is about destroying the original painting, and about the glorification of decline . . . You destroy something to make something more beautiful — just as in kindy you squash two bits of paper together to make a beautiful butterfly . . . It's like Jimmy leaving a skin behind. He's now this anti-drug, pro-family advocate, leaving behind him the skin of his past life.

The artist quoted in *The Australian*, *The Nation*, 11 March 2009, p. 7

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Ben Quilty was brought up in semi-rural suburban north-west Kenthurst, where kids had little to do except get into trouble, where car-hoon culture was a proving ground for self-worth and masculinity, where racing cars and excessive drinking were almost a rite of passage for male youth. This background provided the artist with both a subject and a determination to challenge tradition. Having his HSC artwork exhibited in ARTEXPRESS gave him the impetus to communicate these experiences and ideas through art.

Quilty's thick, buttery paint applied in bold sweeps suggests an intuitive, expressionistic interpretation of his subject. Working initially from photographs, he will often loosely draw his subject using aerosol paint before applying the thick oil paint. Each image seems to have been cropped so that it has maximum impact on the viewer. What is interesting about Quilty's application of paint, though, is its strong tonal elements: the further back you stand from his works the more realistic they become. The large scale and recognisable subject matter (such as the iconic hamburger in *The Lot 2* 2006) have given his works their wide appeal. They have a direct impact on the viewer. In his 2005 show *Ache*, Quilty



Ben Quilty at work in the studio, applying paint with a palette knife. Wearing gloves and a face mask protects him from the solvents and fumes associated with using oil paints.

Photo: Andrew Quilty
Courtesy of the artist and Grant Pirrie Gallery

included skulls in his repertoire while continuing to feature motor vehicles as subject matter. His Toyota Hiaces (some with skull faces or horns) look menacing as they seem to rear towards a sudden stop, up close to the viewer. Included in this exhibition was a large-scale painting of a Mercedes-Benz called *Want, Want, Want*. These works convey both the importance of cars to Australians and how, in our acquisitive culture, the type of car owned is linked not only to social status but to identity. The car is almost a fetish symbol, a product of advertising pitched at male desire to possess but, conversely, also a symbol of self-destruction, as our road toll attests.

The boldness and mundane nature of his imagery and the simplification of form links his work with Pop art, yet his expressive paint application is more suggestive of American Abstract Expressionism.

The title of a 2004 exhibition featuring his series on another Australian icon, the budgerigar, was *Young and Free*, a quote from our national anthem and a restatement of his interest in exploring Australian culture. But with many of his 'budgies' now trapped in cages around the world, he also raises questions about just how independent we are. His source material for this series was downloaded from an American internet site that discussed how budgerigars have been selectively bred for colour and size to suit pet owners rather than survival in their natural Australian desert habitat.

Parallel to these projects, Quilty has also sustained a practice in portraiture, not only self-portraits (usually of himself in a semi-comatose or hung-over state, with listless, half-closed eyes) but also entrants for the Archibald Prize. In 2003 he began a series on his young son, Joe. Although he has used flesh tones and has created an individual likeness, the expected delicateness and fragility of a baby is missing. Instead he has shown his son's face contorted with crying, producing an emotional attachment and sense of urgency, a need to protect. In his 2007 exhibition *Pride and Patriotism* he concentrated on historical male role models, particularly people of power, violence and irresponsibility and those in decline. It included a portrait of Captain Cook, who supposedly shot the first Aboriginal he met, and John Howard holding a handgun after the crackdown on guns as a result of the Port Arthur tragedy. He included an image of himself in this exhibition.

Use the **Ben Quilty** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit this artist's official website.

Recently Quilty has turned to massive inkblot-style heads (see his Archibald entry for 2009) and skeletons.

Quilty examines and questions cultural identity, in particular Australian masculinity and the excesses of youth as represented by their reckless quest for speed and irresponsible alcohol use. His works exploring issues of masculine aggression and self-destruction are discomfiting yet compelling.

Artist's statements

'... with the hamburger paintings, viewers are drawn to the luscious pastel surface, but when they leave this intimate space the huge, flaccid, greasy image of a hamburger is revealed.'

Quoted in *Art World*, October/November 2008

'It was one of those kinds of cars that reeked of rebellion. It was loud and furious and not part of the culture of Paddington. You're cruising around at night with a joint hanging out of your mouth, trying to be cool, and you're also risking your life with other guys sitting inside the car.'

Commenting on his Torana car, quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17–18 March 2007

Andrew Sayers, Director of the National Portrait Gallery, on Quilty's award for the Self-Portrait Prize (\$40 000) for his *Self Portrait Dead (Over the Hills and Far Away)*, quoted in *UQ News*, issue 569, November 2007

CRITICAL PRACTICE

'It shows extraordinary skill and maturity to paint a work in what are literally livid colours, with great visceral globs of paint over just the primed canvas. The work gives a compelling contemporary expression to one of the age-old themes in portraiture — the artist's awareness of mortality.'

STUDYING ART

- 1 How is Ben Quilty's work a statement about contemporary urban life?
- 2 What methods does Quilty use to attract his audience and draw them into the painting?
- 3 Art critic Lennie Ann Lowe has said that Quilty's work charts 'male power and irresponsibility'. Why do you think she said this, and do you agree?

ARTMAKING

Create a series of artworks (paintings or linoprints) based on items associated with adolescent identity, such as iPods or items of clothing.

FURTHER RESEARCH

In the *Ache* series Quilty paints vans with grinning skull faces and horns, creating menacing mutants. Another Australian artist, Patricia Piccinini, also created mutants based on cars and motorbikes in her *Car Nuggets* series. How is their work similar and different? Use a Venn diagram or double bubble map to organise your thoughts.

Kathleen PETYARRE

(born c. 1940, Australian)

Gloria PETYARRE

(born c. 1945, Australian)

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Structural in their use of symbols and pattern; *Cultural* in the underlying meaning and links to the Dreaming

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The artworks are closely linked to the artists' culture and affinity to the land. The artworks can be interpreted in different ways by different audiences.

eBook *plus*

GLORIA PETYARRE

Use the **Gloria Petyarre** and **Kathleen Petyarre** weblinks in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by these Indigenous Australian artists.



Kathleen Petyarre
***Dusk in Thorny Devil Lizard Country
(Watercourses & Rockholes)*** 1999
synthetic polymer on Belgian linen
91 × 152 cm
Photo by Clayton Glen Photography
© Gallerie Australis

Kathleen Petyarre's artworks reflect her knowledge and respect for her country, an ancient world of endless space and beauty. By painting her Dreamings, she is holding on to her country.

CRITICAL STUDY

Petyarre's work suggests journeys and vast distances. Our eye is led off the edges of the canvas. We are made aware that there is more than what we actually see. What we see as a hailstorm or a lizard holds deeper symbolic meaning. We also admire the brilliance of her technique. The surfaces of her works are alive with shimmering yet gentle movement. Her colours create a rich, textural surface of repeated patterns.

CRITICAL STUDY

Gloria Petyarre's work has an exuberance and dynamic sense of life. The rich oranges applied in close tonal variations create vibrancy. A strong, swirling rhythm reminds us of wind sweeping through leaves of dense foliage. The painting depicts the leaves of special plants used to treat wounds, bites and rashes and as an insect repellent. Utopian women collect the leaves and boil them to extract resin, mixing this with kangaroo fat to create a paste that can be stored for a long time. By painting this story, Gloria is paying homage to the spirit of the medicine plant in the hope that it will continue to grow. Women perform the bush medicine ceremony, involving song, dance and body decoration, at various times of the year. Although she paints traditional women's business subjects, her art has become increasingly abstract as she has experimented with line, colour and tone. Unlike her sister's work, Gloria avoids a central focus, and this tends to give her paintings a greater sense of movement and individuality.

Gloria Petyarre was a finalist in the 2009 Wynne Prize with a startling blue version of this theme of bush medicine leaves. The main elements of her work are repetition and abstraction. Her paintings are unique in their confident and skilful brushwork. Gloria has become the first Australian artist commissioned by the international fashion house Hermes, based in Paris. Her leaf design was selected for use in their 2009 silk scarf collection.

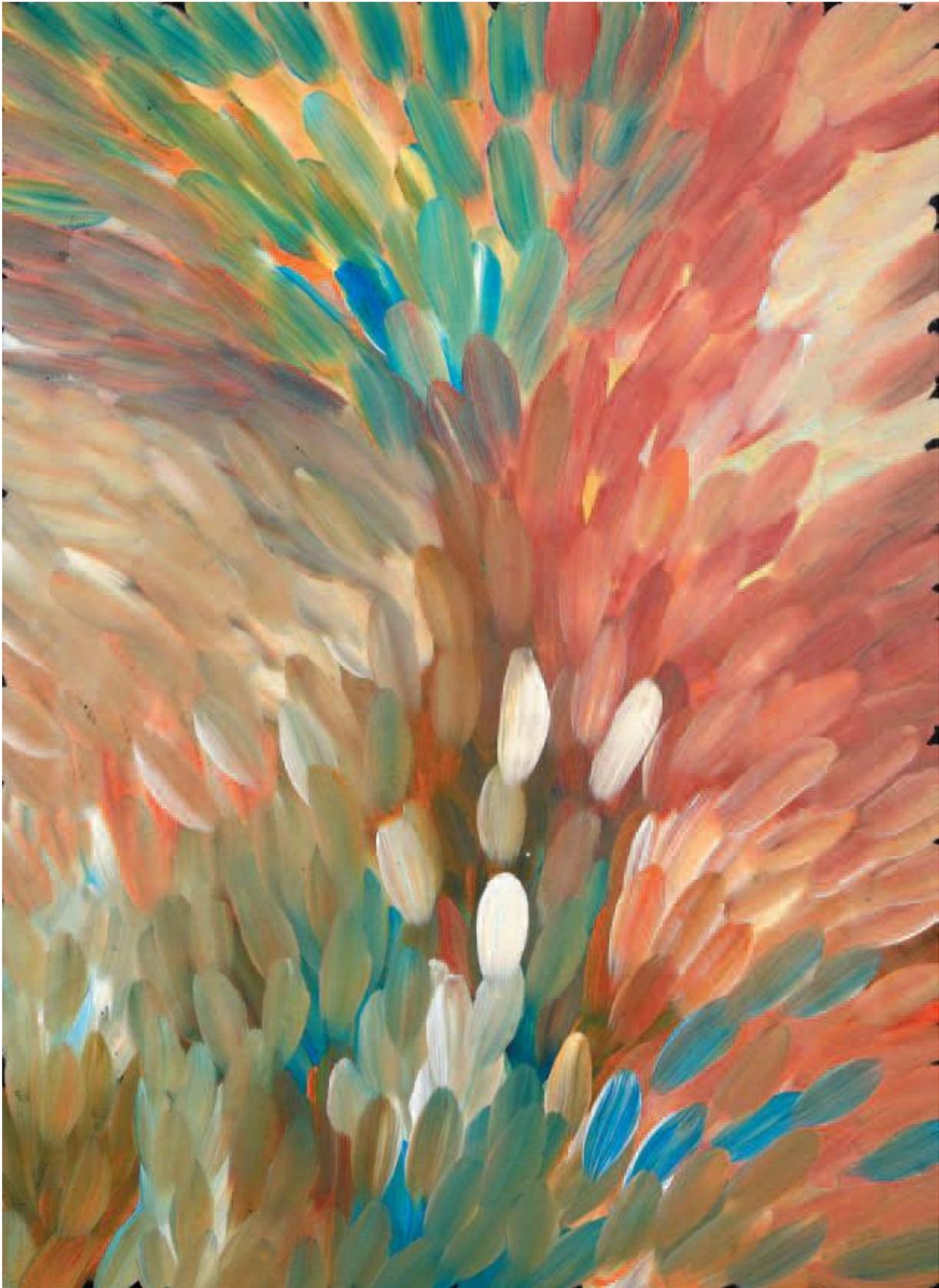
HISTORICAL STUDY

Sisters Kathleen and Gloria Petyarre come from a family that has dominated women's Indigenous art (including Ada Petyarre (Bird), Violet Petyarre and Myrtle Petyarre), each interpreting their Dreaming story in unique ways. They were born at remote Atnangker, an important water soakage for Aboriginal people on the western boundary of the Utopia Station, 275 kilometres north of Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. They belong to the Alywarre/eastern Anmatyerre language group and speak eastern Anmatyerre, with English as their second language.

Kathleen Petyarre's artworks are expressions of her country and her Dreamings, which she inherited from her grandfather and father. She is a custodian (along with her brothers and sisters) of the Mountain Devil Lizard Dreaming, Green Pea Dreaming, Woman Hunting Emu and Dingo Dreaming. The most common theme in her paintings is the Mountain Devil Lizard Dreaming. The Mountain Devil Lizard is a small, spiky lizard that lives in the desert and travels great distances, changing colour as it crosses different terrain.

Kathleen Petyarre has made a significant contribution to contemporary Aboriginal art. Her art has helped open up our ideas and expectations of Indigenous art. Her work can be viewed and appreciated on various levels. It is deeply meaningful as religious art — a true record of Aboriginal Dreamings with references to particular places. It also belongs within international art, with links to Impressionism, abstraction and minimalism, owing to her sensitive, refined handling of colour and texture.

Kathleen spends a great deal of time preparing her canvas, adding layer upon layer of different coloured paints and allowing them to soak into the canvas so that they dilute one another. She then adds layers of fine dots in order to build up her texture. Her work is finely controlled.



Gloria Tamerre Petyarre
Bush Medicine Dreaming 2009
acrylic on Belgian linen
90 × 122 cm

Image: courtesy of Central Art — Aboriginal Art Store,
Alice Springs
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In many of Kathleen Petyarre's latest works, she has moved away from the aerial perspective (as if looking at the land from above) generally adopted in traditional Aboriginal art and has instead conveyed the suggestion of a horizontal perspective, as if looking across the land from a low angle. This has added a greater sense of movement to her work. It has also made her work more individual and vital.

Gloria Petyarre was a founding member of the Utopian Women's Batik Group in the 1970s, when she merged traditional symbols and techniques with the new medium of silk painting. In the late 1980s she turned to painting on canvas. Gloria is best known for her 'bush medicine' paintings, but she also paints 'mountain devil', 'Awelye' and 'Atnangkere growth'. In 1991 she had her first solo exhibition in Sydney, which was soon followed by one in New York. In 1997 she received the Wynne Prize.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Critical writing often includes descriptions (identifying qualities). Describe the painting technique of either Kathleen or Gloria Petyarre (paint application, types of colour etc.).
- 2 Critical writing often includes a value judgement of the artwork. Can you find a sentence in the critical writing in this study that shows admiration of either of the Petyarre sisters' work?
- 3 Critical writers also suggest possible interpretations of an artwork to help you appreciate or understand it. Can you find a sentence that offers a possible 'way of seeing' or suggestions of what is being represented?

Historical study

- 4 Name three Dreamings painted by Kathleen Petyarre.
- 5 Historical writing often offers explanations of the significance (or importance) of the artist. Identify any mention of Kathleen Petyarre's significance and the reasons given.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Critical study

Imagine you have been asked to curate an exhibition of Utopian art (from the area of Utopia Station, north of Alice Springs). Write a paragraph expressing your opinion of a Kathleen or Gloria Petyarre painting and a paragraph on another Utopian artist's work.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create an aerial perspective painting of your suburb or neighbourhood. Concentrate on line, pattern and texture. You might like to work on black paper, leaving spaces between your colour areas (so the spaces are left black).
- 2 Create a linoprint based on the growth pattern of plants or roots, concentrating on pattern and the balance between lines and shapes.

Abbey McCULLOCH

(b. 1975, Australian)

FORM
painting

FRAMES
Cultural in the way she comments on contemporary society;
Subjective in the mood created

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
There is a strong relationship between the artist and her views of the contemporary world, and this helps create artworks of subjective appeal to the audience.

eBookplus

**ABBHEY MCCULLOCH:
WORKS**

Use the **Abbey McCulloch** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this artist.



Abbey McCulloch's 2008 exhibition, *The Sting*, from which *Three Screwdrivers* is drawn, included a series of 29 paintings linked both visually and narratively. Inspired by hearing women arguing in the street as she struggled to sleep, these paintings are McCulloch's interpretation of women, their inner psyche, the raw and brutal aspects of their lives, their secrets as well as their expectations.

CRITICAL STUDY

Three Screwdrivers 2008

oil on canvas

90 × 390 cm

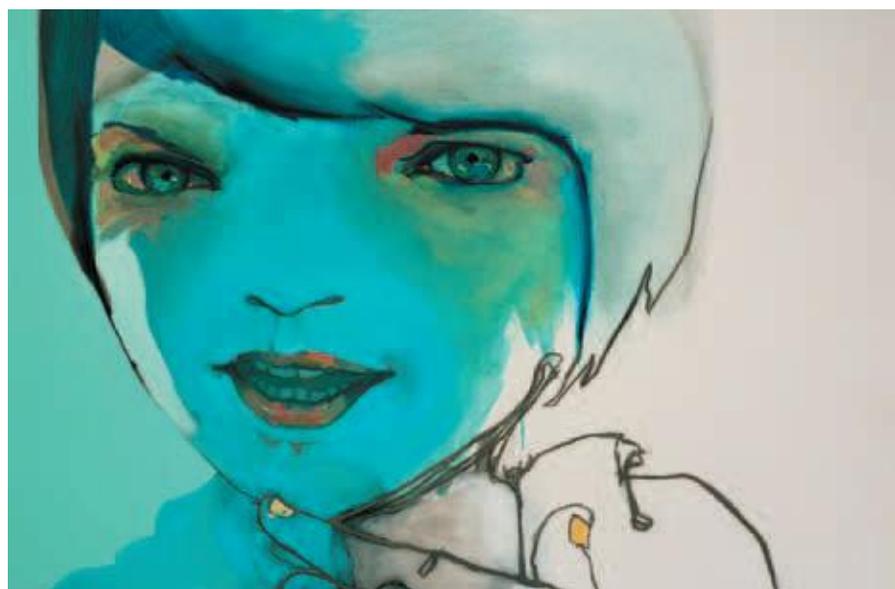
Courtesy of the artist and Helen Gory Galerie

As their obscenities filled the early hours of the morning, I felt angry and embarrassed . . . I wanted to harness something unsettling about the whole experience. I usually see women in the role of enabler and comforter, but I also see vanity, and a hint of something malevolent.

Quoted from a press release, Schubert Contemporary Gallery

Abbey McCulloch's method of squeezing her subject into a corner intensifies the visual and emotional impact of the image. Although in *Nell Schofield* the face is simplified in a manner similar to the emotive drawings of Joy Hester, it strengthens our awareness of the subject's mood and individuality. The eyes and mouth become the key features of the face. The energetic, expressive contour

CRITICAL STUDY



Nell Schofield 2009

oil on canvas

90 × 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Helen Gory Galerie

lines, washes of paint and choice of delicate colours add to its femininity. The subtle blending of colour and the way it is neither controlled by the line work nor used to merely define form add to the allure and distinctive McCulloch style. This work was selected as a finalist in the Archibald Prize, as was her portrait of actress Toni Collette the previous year. Recognition in this prestigious exhibition established McCulloch as a talented artist of contemporary relevance who is able to convey the individuality and personality of her sitter.

CRITICAL STUDY

In *Kirsty* one wonders about the relationship between the main figure and the smaller red figure in front — is it her child, sister or alter ego, or a past memory of herself? The choice of colours and concentration on the eyes suggests something sinister. The far-away look and smears of colour around and below the eyes creates a feeling of sadness, even despair, while the pouting lips suggest vulnerability. Despite the delicate line work and the beauty of the luscious, liquid surface of the lips, the effect is disquieting. With this work, McCulloch has moved further away from her flat pastel surfaces, simplified shadows and graphic outlines reminiscent of fashion illustrations towards nymphs of ethereal beauty that are disconcerting as well as enticing. There is a meld between fantasy and reality.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

As a response to her own experiences, Abbey McCulloch has developed a very personal style of loose, illustrative drawings with hints of bad-girl imagery and graffiti art and the graphic style of popular magazine culture. Her works combine

(right)

Kirsty 2009

oil on canvas

150 × 90 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Helen Gory Galerie

(below)

Abbey McCulloch in the studio, 2010

Photo courtesy of the artist and Helen Gory Galerie



innocence with hints of the sinister or evil. Her 'girls', particularly in her earlier work, such as her 2005 exhibition *I Miss You Most of All*, are seductive and provocative (a young girl pokes her tongue out as she stares at the viewer; another poses coyly in a bikini) yet also beguilingly innocent (a sideways, demure glance or a finger hovering at the corner of a pouting mouth in a self-conscious gesture). Depictions of contemporary situations, such as friends talking on mobiles or chatting in cafés, hint at deeper meanings with the sense of vulnerability and of the defences that females erect even in everyday situations, such as looking into a mirror. Her subjects often give the impression that they are aware they are being observed.

I was dealing with girls in bathrooms, close-ups, trying to get into the psychology of women. I chose to peel back something that you wouldn't normally stop to think about.

Quoted in *Harper's Bazaar*, August 2006, p. 69

McCulloch's works pose questions, challenging the audience to interpret the hidden stories. They have a strong visual impact, in part owing to her distinctive colour schemes, as well as an emotional one.

Artist's statement

'A sketch is often recreated directly onto the canvas . . . I try to produce paintings that echo the spontaneity of a sketch.'

'[Abbey McCulloch's] paintings explore the decadent fascinations of a culture increasingly obsessed with youth and glamour.'

Jacqueline Houghton, Schubert Gallery, quoted in *Harper's Bazaar*, August 2006

'Abbey McCulloch, this year an Archibald finalist, has the ability to both repel and enchant with her paintings of glacial beauties . . . There's something quite disarming and appealing about these modern Modigliani-esque muses with their pouts and baleful eyes. In this latest body of work, McCulloch invites us to examine the women she knows as curious constructs, rather than "faithful reflections".'

Quoted in *Harper's Bazaar*, Lifestyle and Culture page, edited by Jeanne Carey, June 2009

CRITICAL PRACTICE

STUDYING ART

- 1 Explain McCulloch's use of colour and the way she applies it in *The Sting* and *Nell*. Don't just name the colour as 'orange' or 'blue', but use descriptive words such as 'zinging yellow' or 'luminous red'.
- 2 What developments in her style can you see between *The Sting* and *Kirsty*?
- 3 How can you interpret her work from the *Subjective Frame*?
- 4 What aspects of her work are Postmodern?
- 5 'I am addicted to the energy lines have. I get so surprised by the substance of a hastily drawn line' (McCulloch quoted in press release for *Glamourama*, Schubert Galleries, 2004). It is obvious by this statement that the line is an important element in the visual language of Abbey McCulloch's artmaking. What else do you see as important considerations in her personal style and means of visual communication?

FURTHER RESEARCH

eBook plus

Use the **Archibald Prize** weblink in your eBookPLUS to select and critically discuss three artworks.

ESSAY QUESTION

Artists often refer to the world around them, commenting on their personal responses and challenging the viewer to form their own opinions. Discuss how two artists comment on the contemporary world.

ARTMAKING

Read the two critical reviews from *Harper's Bazaar* excerpted above then create your own artwork based on the themes/issues communicated in Abbey McCulloch's works. You might like to brainstorm some ideas with a friend to help you decide on a particular issue, or work by yourself using a mind map (page xiv).

or

From your research on Archibald Prize finalists, create a portrait of someone of interest to you who combines the style/technique of two finalists (for example, Ben Quilty, page 99).

Darren SYLVESTER

(b. 1974 Sydney, lives and works in Melbourne)

FORM

photography

FRAME

Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Sylvester responds to the contemporary world, and the audience feels empathy with the people in his images.

eBookplus

ELESSON: INTERVIEW WITH DARREN SYLVESTER

Darren Sylvester offers insights into his work and inspiration. A transcript of the full interview is also available in your eBookPLUS.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES-0728



Your First Love Is Your Last Love 2005

lightjet print

90 × 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

CRITICAL STUDY

A youth sits reading, or perhaps re-reading, a letter. The look on his face and his body language suggest bewilderment, dejection and disappointment. There is a normality that every teenager can relate to, from the school uniform to the junk food. We empathise with the boy, the feeling of his pain at a failed love, of separation.

Sylvester makes references to advertising photography in the types of imagery and 'props' he uses, but he has removed any sense of sentimentality or obvious stereotypes. Instead there is a blankness, a stillness. The composition is staged yet appears completely real.

Sylvester comments on the Romantic notion of love — to love well is to know loss — yet his approach is not sentimental; rather, it is a distillation of his insights into contemporary popular sensibility and urban culture. He arranges his 'subjects' with an objectivity or detachment and with props that situate them within the real world of adolescents today. He is commenting on the anonymity of life in cities and in our global environment, and the human condition of yearning for meaningful, sustaining relationships.



In *Time Has Life's Meaning* two wholesome, happy teenagers enter a photo booth to record the moment. The title suggests they are seeking a physical record of this time as they know unconsciously that not only will their youth pass with time, but so will this friendship. The heightened colour and crisp lighting add to the emotional intensity of the moment.

CRITICAL STUDY

Time Has Life's Meaning 2007

lightjet print
90 × 120 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

Sylvester's practice extends to small sculptural works, video and live musical performances, but it is in his glossy photographic works that we see his main interests, each photograph revealing a poetic idea. His experience in writing short stories and film scripts and composing music underpins his photographic practice. An exhibition of his works will suggest a loose, somewhat disjointed narrative in a similar way to a compilation of pop songs.

Sylvester's works can be linked to popular culture today by their titles (such as his work *Only You Know (Who You Are)* 2003) and by situations that remind us of song lyrics. Friendship is explored in Sylvester's series *If All We Have Is Each Other; That's OK*, exhibited in 2003. The image that bears the name of the exhibition is a close shot of three teenage girls (one with teeth braces) in sports uniform chatting and laughing while eating a celebratory lunch of KFC. In *For the Most Part Humans Seem Ugly and Annoying*, a youth sits alone in a car, the passenger door open, parked in a lonely yet beautiful spot on a cliff overlooking the ocean as night approaches. In fact, this is a self-portrait.

Where once his works started with a short story, now they begin with a title. He then imagines the character and starts looking for a suitable model. He first

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

plans the work on paper then creates sets and adds props, deciding what clothes and makeup his 'characters' should bring to the shoot. He generally produces only six photographs a year, so they are well thought through and selected from the multiple frames taken for each concept.

Sylvester's work also connects with the Y generation with respect to technology. In *Doomed* 2008 he recreated three stills from the movie *Doom* (2005), his interpretation of the character playing the handheld video game of Galaxian II, an in-joke being to place the game sideways, thus rendering it unplayable. This was accompanied in the exhibition by re-creations of 1970s photos of pop music artists similar to Grace Jones and Brian Ferry. A certain nostalgia and theatricality is achieved by using lookalikes in a staged situation, suggesting a television performance with a lurid colour backdrop.

Sylvester questions our changing modes of communication and the expectations and consequences of these instant, abbreviated forms. He is also very aware of the place of branding and logos in our culture. In his 2009 photographs *Help Others and Help Yourself*, he placed twin girls before backdrops carrying the logos of Gucci and Unicef, a reference to a fundraising benefit given by Madonna.

His video works include a parody of Kate Bush and David Bowie in *You Should Let Go of a Dying Relationship* 2006 and *I Was the Last in the Carpenters' Garden* 2008, referencing the pop singing duo of the 1970s Karen and Richard Carpenter.

Darren Sylvester reveals in his photographs his interest in the interaction between people and between people and the objects of popular culture (music, video, computers, advertising), and the way these products affect our lives.

The slick perfection of his images, which adds to their impact and meaning, is a result of careful planning, lighting, staging and selection, with a final digital 'cleansing'.

Interview with the artist, July 2005

What would you say is the main intention or meaning in your photographs?

I like them to be like pop songs, small narratives that detail a part of someone's life — often about the same things pop songs are about. Universal emotions like falling in and out of love, feeling displaced, fear of the future.

How important is your choice of media to your meaning?

I like photography as I like to spend more time thinking about what I'm going to do than making the end result. So photography is great in that it's relatively quicker than, say, painting a picture.

Could you give any advice regarding your technique?

I spend a long time beforehand drawing and writing a list of all the things I need for the photo. Everything is planned out, even down to how I imagine the lighting will be and whether I need to take extra reflectors or lights. Once at the location I take Polaroid photos to start with until I get the light and angle just right. This can take about two hours. Then I basically shoot the same photo over and over again, about 60 times, and from these 60 shots, I choose one. I use a 6 × 6 Hasselblad medium format camera. I shoot on slide film.

How much is digitally manipulated?

All my work goes through Photoshop using Apple computers. In some works there is a lot of manipulation. For example, sometimes it is actually two photos made into one, if I like one aspect from one, and not another. Generally though, besides a bit of contrast control, I don't manipulate them that much. They are as they are taken.

How would you describe your personal visual language (use of media, images or symbols)?

Banal instruments of everyday society — the TV, the telephone, the computer etc. — and giving them, as symbols, the power they have at times to change our lives, whether for good or bad. The concept in my work is really everything.

'Darren Sylvester continues to freeze life, love and longing in his latest series of photographs. Most are populated by people in situations that resemble or imply great moments of emotion connected with love.'

Lenny Ann Low, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Spectrum, 28–29 May 2005

'Within his photographs Sylvester poses his poseurs interacting with the littered detritus of popular culture — nights out, cosmetics, junk food and death — but refuses to mock either subject or object. By placing these banal props in relation to human beings, Sylvester shows how even the most disposable elements of our disposable culture can be embodied with emotional intensity.'

Press release, Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, January 2008

'Increasingly Sylvester's works reveal a preoccupation with time. He succeeds in transcending the locality of his image, making them look "global" as far as First World mass media conventions are concerned. The images contain specific clues that locate them in fast-moving epochs, including haircuts, make-up, jean trends and laptop models. However, they remain definitely tied to a specific time. In this way, the photos also recall pop music — pop songs may tend towards universality, but they frequently betray the era of their production.'

'Sylvester's pristine and cool images are nonetheless a heartfelt vision of the world. People engaged in everyday occurrences are elevated, by virtue of the artist's technique, into the realms of pictorial beauty.'

CRITICAL PRACTICE

A. Goddard, Contemporary Australian Optimism catalogue, Queensland Art Gallery, 2008, pp. 212–15

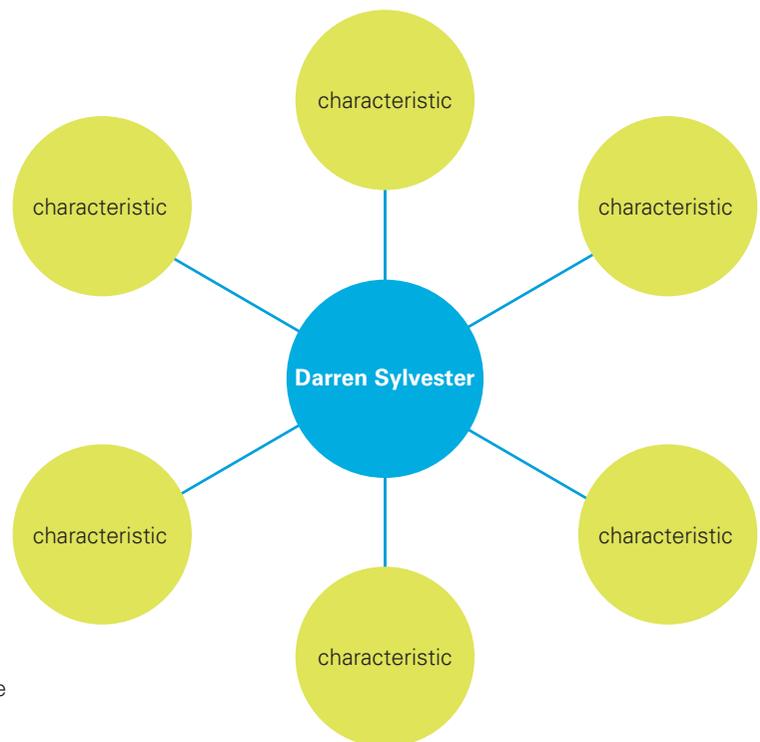
Natasha Bullock, Assistant Curator, Photography and Contemporary Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales, quoted in exhibition catalogue, sullivan+strumpf, *We Can Love since We Know We Can Lose Love*

STUDYING ART

- 1 The contemporary nature of several of Sylvester's images is enhanced by the inclusion of modern technological devices such as the laptop, iPod or mobile phone. What do you think Sylvester is commenting on? (For example, is it how these new ways of communicating are affecting relationships? Are the ease and speed of communication creating expectations and, perhaps, increasing remoteness.)
- 2 How do his titles suggest or deepen the meaning of the photographs?
- 3 There is a casualness, a normality, even a hint of humour to these photographs. How does this affect the way you respond to them, as compared with, say, an advertising image for fast food?
- 4 More than other artworks, photographs pose questions. Because they are often fairly authentic, recognisable records of reality, they allow each individual viewer to interpret them according to their own experiences. A photograph places the viewer at a point of time. We are generally not given a beginning or an end to the 'story' suggested. How does Sylvester invite us to dream, speculate or create narratives (stories) from his photographs?
- 5 Read the two critical reviews and write your own review suitable for a magazine pitched at adolescent readers.
- 6 Summarise the main characteristics of Darren Sylvester's work by using a single bubble map like the one at right.

ARTMAKING

Create a video or a series of photographs or drawings that suggest a story about human relationships.



Darren SYLVESTER

FORMS

photography
and video
installations

FRAME

Postmodern in her use of technology and interactive art forms, and the way she references different cultures in an effort to influence the future

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Mori is both artist and performer in her artworks.

eBook *plus*

MARIKO MORI INTERVIEW

Use the **Mariko Mori** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an interview with this artist.



Esoteric Cosmos: Pure Land 1996–98
glass with photo interlayer
5 panels: 305 × 610 × 2.2 cm
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
Courtesy of Deitch Projects, New York

CRITICAL STUDY

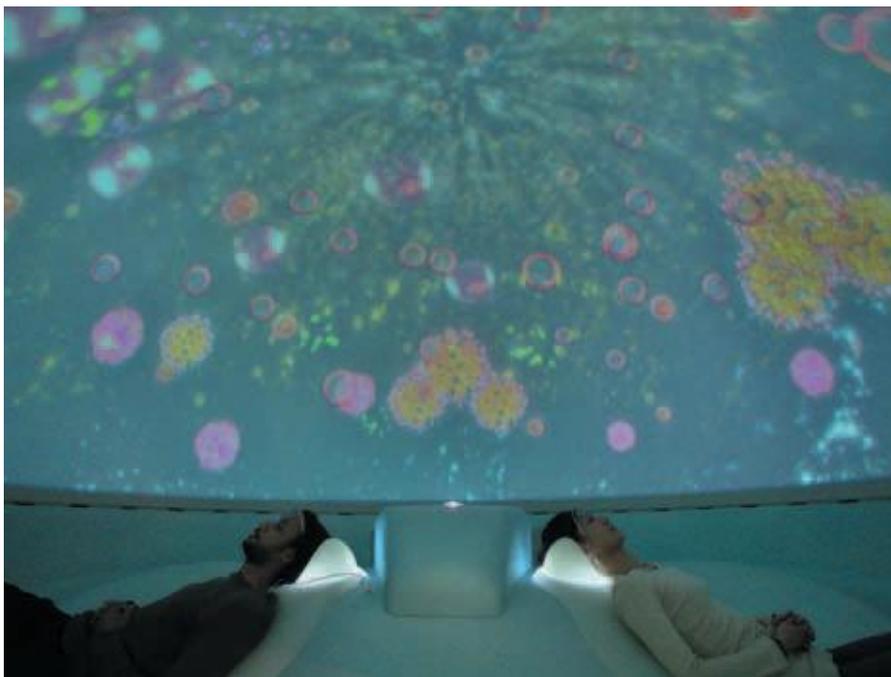
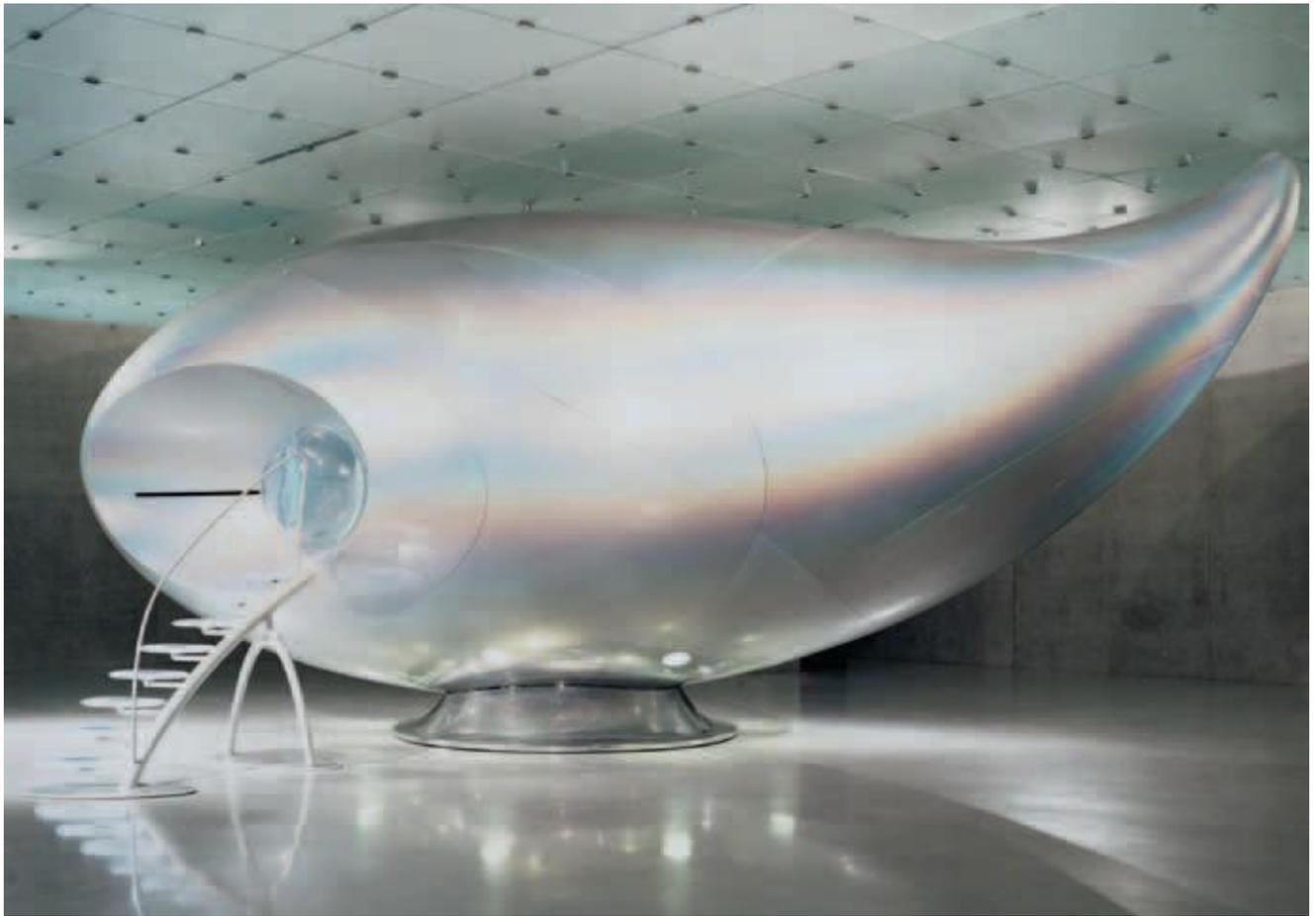
Esoteric Cosmos: Pureland combines Japanese tradition and images with past Western art and contemporary culture. In her work she refers to present-day fashion, science fiction and technology. She explores the relationships between humankind, technology and the spiritual.

CRITICAL STUDY

For *Wave UFO* (opposite) viewers are invited, three at a time, to step into this capsule the size of a house that looks like a futuristic space shuttle. Projected onto a screen is a three-minute, computer-generated light show projecting images that first suggest cosmic vistas of planets and starbursts but are in fact projections of data from the brains of the viewers, who were wired with sensors before entering. The viewer experiences a shift from normal time and space into a realm receptive to spiritual awakening. If the three participants seated inside achieve ‘perfect mental harmony’, the brain waves apparently should form a circle.

The capsule is a fiberglass shell with an iridescent coating. A series of petal-shaped steps leads from the ground up to the circular opening with an automatic sliding door. Mori has explained that her photographs for the work *Beginning of the End* 2000 were costly because she had to work and travel with up to eight people, as well as conceive her capsule and ship it to different parts of the world.

This work is a development of her ‘Dream Temple’, designed for a single participant with computer graphics combined with a real-time 3D movie to represent a modern-day version of an ancient Japanese temple. Mori has said that she based the shape on ‘the inside of a drop of water’ and sought to convey the experience of ‘traveling through a connected world’ (*New York Times*, 8 May 2003). It was first exhibited in Austria, where it attracted 10 000 visitors



(above)

Wave UFO 1999–2002

brainwave interface, vision dome,
projector, computer system, fibreglass,
Technogel®, acrylic, carbon fibre,
aluminium, magnesium
493 × 1134 × 528 cm
Edition of 2 + 1 AP
Courtesy of Shiraishi Contemporary Art,
Inc., Tokyo
Photo: Richard Learoyd

Wave UFO 1999–2002 (detail image of
interior)

brainwave interface, vision dome,
projector, computer system, fibreglass,
Technogel®, acrylic, carbon fibre,
aluminium, magnesium
493 × 1134 × 528 cm
Edition of 2 + 1 AP
Courtesy of Shiraishi Contemporary Art,
Inc., Tokyo
Photo: Tom Powell

over six weeks, and then in New York and other cities. A limited edition of 33 miniaturised versions was created for sale. The project involved consultation with hundreds of experts, from engineers of Lamborghini cars to neuroscientists.

Mariko Mori's main drive in her artmaking is to inspire spiritual peace for humanity. Her influences of contemporary science, mass media culture, Buddhist imagery and Japanese philosophical traditions inform her desire to divert mankind from religious, political and ideological confrontation.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Mariko Mori's background is in the popular culture areas of music and fashion. She studied fashion design in Japan and worked as a fashion model during the late 1980s. She attended art schools in London and New York. As a former fashion model it was perhaps inevitable that she would become the subject in her artmaking. She takes on various guises (personalities) in her large, computer-manipulated images. After the performance shoots, her costumes are sealed in large plexiglass capsules, where they are to remain for 25 years. Thus the costumes as well as the performance, which is photographed or videoed, become the artwork. Mori's work combines Japanese traditions and images with past Western art and contemporary culture. She references present-day fashion, science fiction and technology and explores the relationships between humankind, technology and the spiritual or ethereal (heavenly).

In her fantastic photographs and video installations, Mori aims to involve the viewer in an almost spiritual or otherworldly experience. She is greatly influenced by Buddhist teachings and the idea of Enlightenment as a path to peace and understanding.

Mori also comments on contemporary Japan. While it is a very traditional culture (for example, with rigid codes of behaviour and dress), it has also embraced technology and a global point of view. Mori sees technology as a force for good, as she believes new technologies can increase our imaginative potential.

In *Empty Dream* 1995, the scene is an ocean dome similar to a large aquatic theme park, with Mori as a synthetic mermaid. We are reminded of our consumer world, of cartoons such as *Astro Boy* and futuristic films such as *Star Wars* and *Avatar*.

In the interrelated 1996 photograph and video *Last Departure* and *Miko no Inori* (*The Shaman Girl's Prayer*), the setting is Japan's ultramodern Osaka International Airport, which Mori transforms into a futuristic place. In the video, she gently caresses a crystal ball. Her outfit, white hair and pale, enlarged, gleaming eyes suggest she is a link between humans and the spiritual unknown. The viewer wonders if she is a spiritual being or a techno cyborg. A haunting Japanese song, sung by Mori, is played in the background. The song adds to the unsettling beauty of the work.

In the *Nirvana* video series of 1996–97, Mori floats above the land as some kind of sea goddess or spiritual messenger.

Mariko Mori's works include photographs, installations, videos and interactive works that span cultures and reference the past as well as pointing towards the future.

STUDYING ART

- 1 How appropriate is Mori's choice of media to work in? (How does it suit her experiences and the meaning she is trying to convey in her artmaking?)
- 2 Imagine you are asked to write an article on Mariko Mori for a teenage magazine. Create a title for your article and write half a page giving your opinion of her work.
- 3 How is Mori merging aspects of the future with spiritual traditions of the past? (Cherry blossom and the tea ceremony meets manga and Hello Kitty!)
- 4 How does her work reflect influences from both the Eastern and Western cultures?

FURTHER RESEARCH

eBook plus

- 1 Use the **Mariko Mori and Salvador Dali** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read a review discussing the work of these two artists.

eBook plus

- 2 Use the **Mori exhibition review** weblink in your eBookPLUS to read an internet review of a 2001 Mariko Mori exhibition in Japan.

ARTMAKING

Create a video that reflects aspects of your own culture.

FORMS

photography, film and video, virtual reality

FRAMES

Postmodern in her use of contemporary culture and references to mass media culture; *Cultural* in her commentary on Chinese society

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

She uses video and virtual reality to comment on her world, specifically the youth of contemporary Chinese society.



In *Deep Breathing*, the costumes suggest power as the adversaries play out their combat games, traversing the city landscape of China today. The cow adds a fantasy element against the dismal urban backdrop.

In *Super-Junkman*, we are immediately aware of the contrast in cultures — from today's youth to their parents' lives. The figure at the door seems to be from a different time and world from the characters in costume, yet the vivid colours



eBook plus

CAO FEI ONLINE

Use the **Cao Fei** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit this artist's official website.

Cosplayers — Deep Breathing 2004
photo
Courtesy of Vitamin Creative Space

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY

UN Cosplayers — Super Junkman 2006
photo
Courtesy of Vitamin Creative Space

and repetition of the red creates a sense of unity, a blending of the real with the illusory. We are challenged to recognise the impact of consumerism and globalisation on the Chinese people. It is about how fantasy exists in real life.

CRITICAL STUDY

The 30-minute epic *China Tracy*, which was exhibited at the Venice Biennale and on YouTube, documents Cao Fei's experiences after discovering the virtual world of Second Life, which replicates reality, challenging the limitations of material form. In Second Life it is possible to make friends from all over the world — it offers the world in microcosm.



China Tracy 2007

China Tracy Pavilion, Venice Biennale 52
video, 28 min.

Courtesy of Vitamin Creative Space

Cao Fei has developed her ultra ego or fantasy personality (her 'avatar') in a virtual world to explore her dreams — a magical landscape in which everything is perfect. She has employed exciting visual effects that appear to interweave reality and illusion. In this respect she brings to mind Surrealists such as Salvador Dali (page 200). As *China Tracy*, Cao Fei develops a deeply emotional relationship with another avatar.

China Tracy merges role-playing, ethnographic documentary and animation.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Born in Guangzhou, a manufacturing boomtown in southeast China, and now working in Beijing, Cao Fei made her first short film, *Maladjustment 257*, a year before graduating from the Design Department of Guangzhou Arts Institute (they had no video faculty) in 2000.

Cao Fei creates beautiful, lush short films and video installations that combine escapist fantasies and desires, particularly those of China's young generation, with everyday realities of life in modern, increasingly globalised China. She is interested in consumer society, youth dressed in vibrant costumes, and the contrast between reality and the fantasy world of virtual technology. She uses photography, performance, text and sound in artworks influenced by pop music, superheroes, TV, computer games, electronic entertainment and subcultures such as Japanese manga, and Hong Kong films.

Cosplayers 2004 consisted of a DVD and photography series depicting teenagers dressed up as Japanese anime characters (from manga comics), set against the

urban environment of Guangzhou. Their costumes of vivid purple tunics and gold armour contrasted with the shoddy, sprawling skyline. A similar theme of alternative identity was explored in *Whose Utopia* 2006, a video installation showing light-bulb factory workers on an assembly line, with a spectacular factory backdrop, playing out their dreams — one playing a guitar, another performing ballet, a third performing traditional Chinese dance.

The film *i.Mirror*, shown at the 52nd Venice Biennale in 2007, was created entirely in the online program Second Life, which allows users to make digital versions of themselves called avatars that can interact with avatars of other users. An avatar can be customised and controlled so users can design a parallel life in which they can live out their dreams. In this work Cao Fei indulges her fantasies and love of escapism. Indeed, she believes that in our present society it is impossible to live entirely in reality. Cao Fei uses experimental methods to convey meaning in an unconventional visual language. Through *i.Mirror* and 'RMB City' (an experimental art community in the internet-based virtual world), the artist explores ideas of utopia and future life forms. At the same time, her art represents the issues of her generation.

The interactive work *People's Limbo* 2009, exhibited at the 17th Biennale of Sydney, explores the human condition through a video game that relates to issues of money, power and the future.

Artist's statements

'I am living in a time of blooming subcultures in China . . . A subculture doesn't want to step onto the central stage of the world — it is content to stay marginalized. Enjoying a subculture brings us fun and a world view . . . [it] is straightforward, lively and full of the power to arouse passion immediately.'

'Rapid urbanization in China has led to an intense sense of absurdity, which turns real life into a continually changing soap opera. The rapidity has made urbanized life more illusory than an illusion, and more surreal than surrealism.'

Quoted in *Art World*, February/March 2008, p. 118

'My own work is a form of escape . . . it's impossible for us to live entirely in reality.'

www.wmagazine.com/artdesign/2007/11/energy_artists_fei

'I am interested in the premise that people can choose characters that are very different from their real selves. They can use their character to create a "second life", to change their friends, family and lifestyle — like switching a TV channel.'

<http://artradarasia.wordpress.com/2008/09first-in-new-series-bam-art>

STUDYING ART

- 1 How does Cao Fei mutate reality?
- 2 How does her choice of technology add to the meaning and cultural relevance of her work?
- 3 Both Irene Hanenbergh (page 16) and Cao Fei use technology to create fantasy worlds, but their approach, subject and meaning differ. Explain their similarities and differences in artmaking practice.
- 4 What do you learn about present-day China and Cao Fei's interests by reading her statements? How do her statements relate to her artmaking?

ESSAY QUESTION

'Women artists have a more incisive understanding of the relationships between people and social systems, and can transcend them. They have an insightful and penetrating knowledge of the essence of the world' (Cao Fei, quoted in *Art World*, February/March 2008). Discuss the work of at least two female artists who comment on their world. Suggestions: Mariko Mori, Shirin Neshat, Tracey Emin, Barbara Kruger, Penny Byrne.

FORM

printmaking

FRAME

Subjective — imaginative approach suggesting a mood

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Baldessin's art is a statement of how he views the world, based on his personal past experiences. A gentle movement is created across the series.

eBook plus

GEORGE BALDESSIN: WORKS

Use the **George Baldessin** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore more works by this artist.

CRITICAL STUDY

The exciting series *Occasional Images from a City Chamber* takes us on a journey through dark spaces, strong tones, subtle textures, expressive, almost blunt lines, everyday objects and the female figure. One plate in the series of 25 is shown opposite.

Baldessin's approach is bold and expressive. His etchings show a high degree of technical skill and innovative use of the medium. The large scale of the series adds to its impressiveness and affirms Baldessin as a master printmaker.

Artist's statement

'What am I trying to express? — I think human weakness through the vulnerable figure . . . this is why distortion plays such an important part and the element of drama is ever present.'

Letter from Baldessin to Daniel Thomas, 28 December 1965, artist's file, Art Gallery of NSW Research Library and Archive

HISTORICAL STUDY

George Baldessin was born in Italy in 1939. His mother, a naturalised Australian, returned to Australia in the hope of arranging immigration for her husband and newly born son. The outbreak of war not only postponed this but resulted in his father being conscripted into the Italian army.

The family was not reunited until 1949, when father and son finally landed in Melbourne as poor immigrants. This is perhaps the underlying reason for Baldessin's expression of feelings of isolation and anguish in his art. His personal experiences are also evident in the way he severs, fragments or distorts much of his imagery. His prints are not traditionally beautiful but powerfully convey tension and intense emotion.

In many of Baldessin's drawings of women, the faces appear almost as masks (as, for example, in this etching); many, in fact, are a likeness of Baldessin himself.

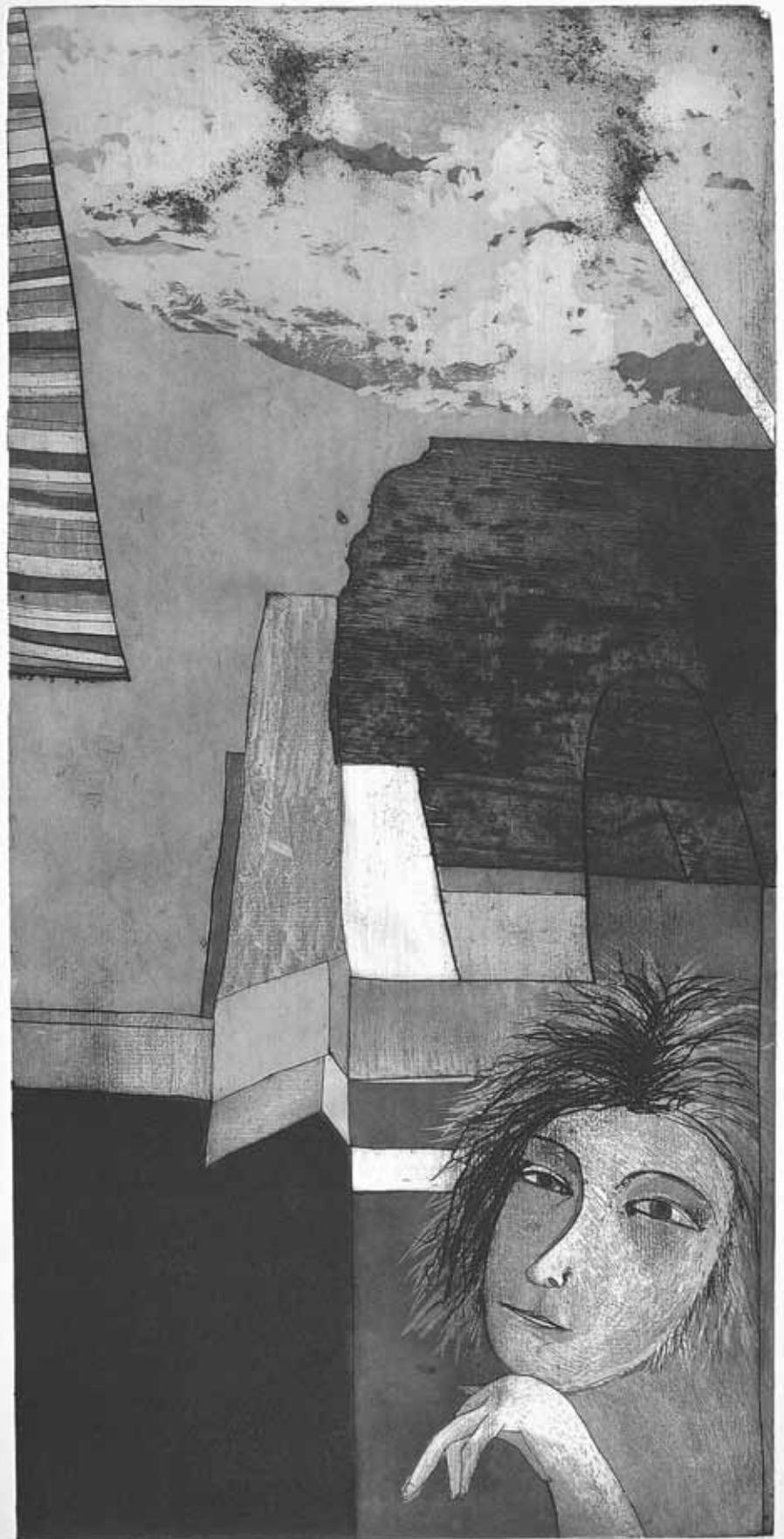
Baldessin was trained as a painter, sculptor and printmaker but never exhibited his paintings. He began teaching printmaking in Melbourne and taught at various times until his death in a car accident in 1978. He travelled and studied in England, Italy, Paris and Japan, perfecting his technique and gaining inspiration. The result was a very individual style and range of imagery.

Baldessin's work is provocative, challenging the viewer with alienated figures and dislocated bodies. His figures are strange, almost tragic (full of sadness), existing in an unreal world. The female figure is his main subject. The figure is often placed against chimney smoke or a window. These figures and other objects, such as chairs, tables and venetian blinds, seem to float at random across the etching plate. Yet when Baldessin works in series, such as the 1975 series *Occasional Images from a City Chamber*, they create a unified whole. They almost form a narrative (story).

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Baldessin worked directly on his etching plates without doing preparatory drawings. The plate was where he developed his imagery and ideas. At first he worked on the backs of steel-faced copper commercial photographic plates.

He later switched to zinc plates, which were cheaper and had a good etching surface. These came in standard sizes and thus determined the uniformity of the size of his individual pieces in a series.



Occasional Images from a City Chamber

1975

etching, soft-ground, aquatint, black ink
on white wove paper

100.3 × 49.9 cm each

Collection: Art Gallery of New South
Wales

Purchased 1977

Accn no. 231.1977.a-y

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

For this series Baldessin printed on silver laminated paper but produced an extra edition of plates 12, 13, 14 and 23 on both white and silver for separate display and sale. Baldessin was assisted in his printing by Doug Hails, and the printing of this series took six months. The process was slow mainly because of the use of the special silver laminated paper. As a proof print was made of each plate, it was laid out on the floor so the artist could see the progression of the imagery.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Can you find any statements of opinion in the critical study section?
- 2 Quote any sentences that describe the artwork.

Historical study

- 3 Art historians often provide biographical details of the artist. How do the details of Baldessin's early life given here help you understand his work?
- 4 Art historians also deal in facts. What facts are you given about Baldessin's working methods?

ARTMAKING

Use your feelings on your first day back at school as inspiration for an etching. (A scraperboard or monoprint could be used as an alternative, if etching materials are not available.)

Salvatore ZOFREA

(b. 1946 in Italy, came to Australia in 1956)

FORM

printmaking

FRAMES

Subjective— He uses his imagination and personal experiences and memories. He is able to capture such moods as hope, anxiety, sorrow and the natural resilience of the human spirit.

Cultural— His woodblocks reflect his Italian immigrant experience, the hardships of leaving his homeland and the importance of family as they gradually assimilated into Australian life.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The artist responds to his past immediate world and his family.

eBook *plus*

SALVATORE ZOFREA

Use the **Salvatore Zofrea** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a biography and selected works of this artist



This work references Zofrea as a young boy when, from the age of 11, he sold home-grown vegetables around his neighbourhood of Seaforth. His father had bought a block of land next to their house and planted it with vegetables for the family. Every Sunday morning Salvatore would set out with a friend and a cart of vegetables. The cart was knocked together out of an old wooden pineapple box and discarded pram wheels. From the money he earned, Salvatore was able to purchase art materials. Zofrea has recalled it as a happy, uncomplicated period, a time of innocence and safety.

CRITICAL STUDY

Selling Vegetables Door to Door 1994–99
woodblock print; black ink on heavy white Japanese Hitachi paper
45.0 × 59.5 cm
Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
Gift of the artist, 2001
© Zofrea
Accn no. 130.2001.8
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

My Mother and Father Together Again depicts the reunion of Zofrea's family in Australia after six years of separation. The mother, daughters and youngest son Salvatore had remained in Italy through the war years. A mood of celebration

CRITICAL STUDY

is suggested. Note the way we are given just a hint of the table, affording us a glimpse of the situation, but by having the figures close up we are drawn into their relationships and individuality. The lines in the roof help create a sense of depth. The direction of the carving adds to the sense of solidity and realism of the figures.

My Mother and Father Together Again

1994–99
 woodblock print; black ink on heavy white Japanese Hitachi paper
 45.0 × 59.5 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of the artist, 2001
 © Zofrea
 Accn no. 130.2001.7
 Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



CRITICAL STUDY

The Death of My Grandfather records a sad gathering, part of the ritual of death as experienced by an Italian family, who take part in the dressing of the dead ready for burial. It was a moment of shock and confusion as well as grief for the young Salvatore, who entered the room to find his grandfather's eyes still open. We are privileged witnesses to a personal memory and appreciate the universal and timeless bond of a family in mourning.

The Death of My Grandfather

1994–99
 woodblock print; black ink on heavy white Japanese Hitachi paper
 40 × 60 cm
 Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales
 Gift of the artist, 2000
 © Zofrea
 Accn no. 68.2000.26
 Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Zofrea is known for his intimate portrait painting as well as large, dramatic, complex group portraits, both paintings and woodblock prints. Many of his works involve allegory or religious symbolism, such as his 150 paintings of the Psalms.

Another aspect of his work focuses on the rituals and values expressed in routines of everyday life: his memories of childhood gatherings on Christmas

Eve and picnics, killing a pig for making salami, crushing olives for oil, collecting firewood, catching the Manly ferry, or playing cards with his family. His works combine personal experiences and imagination to capture diverse moods and emotional states, including hope, fright (for example, on his first sight of the sea as a boy) and despair.

Zofrea's *Appassionata* series of 100 woodcuts was a five-year project that took the form of visual narratives, reflecting on his bond with his birthplace in Italy, the importance of family and the difficulties of assimilating in Australia. It is a personal record conveying the experiences and emotions that meant most to Zofrea. Along with the strong sense of family ties is a sense of place and history. Zofrea appears within these works as a boy, as an adolescent and finally as a mature adult. He has documented a life story, including neighbours, family gatherings and arguments, sickness and death.

Zofrea's woodblock prints are essentially drawings, the carved lines creating contour and shadow. There is a balance between the finely textured black and white areas, rather than a contrast in a bold-designed graphic way, as is usual with blockprinting, whether woodblock or lino, such as in the work of Margaret Preston and Barbara Hanrahan.

Although Zofrea enjoys the process of developing his drawings into images suitable for woodblocks (after several studies and compositional decisions, they are drawn in charcoal on the block) as well as the actual carving, he prefers to leave the printing to others.

His images begin with his memories and experiences, but he also uses old photographs as sources. Zofrea creates an expressive impact by leaving his woodblocks in black and white. He creates a mid tone by cutting out textured areas. These works are carved into soft, fine-grained wood. Each of the *Appassionata* woodcuts was printed in an edition of 14 with six artist's proofs.

STUDYING ART

- 1 How has Zofrea used cropping of the subject, viewpoint and scale to create an intimacy with the viewer?
- 2 Describe Zofrea's use of line and proportion in his woodblocks to create a sense of reality, three-dimensional form and mood?
- 3 When working in the lino or woodblock printing medium, an artist must carefully consider the balance of black and white areas and the direction of his cutting. How successful do you think Zofrea is working in the printmaking medium? What do you like most about the prints shown here?
- 4 Write your own response to one of Zofrea's artworks. Try to use some of the following words and phrases: *robust, spontaneous, honest interpretation, powerful, imaginative, personal experiences, tension, expressive.*

FURTHER RESEARCH

Subjective Frame

- 1 Analyse the similarities in the work of Zofrea to that of Edvard Munch (page 10), Vincent van Gogh (page 176) or Max Beckman. You might like to use a double bubble map to organise your ideas.
- 2 It has been said that many artists have had an influence on Zofrea's artmaking including Leonardo da Vinci, Vincent van Gogh, Max Beckman, Soutine and Edvard Munch. Research one of these artists and describe any similarities you can see in their work to Zofrea's.

ESSAY QUESTION

Analyse the power of linoblock printing to convey meaning in the works of Zofrea and Rew Hanks (page 126).

ARTMAKING

Using the theme of the family, create an interesting group portrait either in paint or as a linoprint using Zofrea's techniques as inspiration. Don't forget that with a print the image is reversed when printed, so be careful if you wish to add any words. When considering what aspect of family life should be your subject matter, either brainstorm ideas with your classmates (consider the DOVE method, page ix) or create your own mind map (page xiv).

FORM

hand-coloured linocuts

FRAMES

Postmodern in his creation of fables that challenge history; *Cultural* in his exploration of themes and issues of our society

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The audience is intrigued by the complexity of the imagery.

eBookplus

THE LITHOGRAPHIC PROCESS

Use the **Lithographic process** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about this artmaking technique as demonstrated by Rew Hanks.



It's Not Always Black or White 2008

linocut

97 × 74 cm

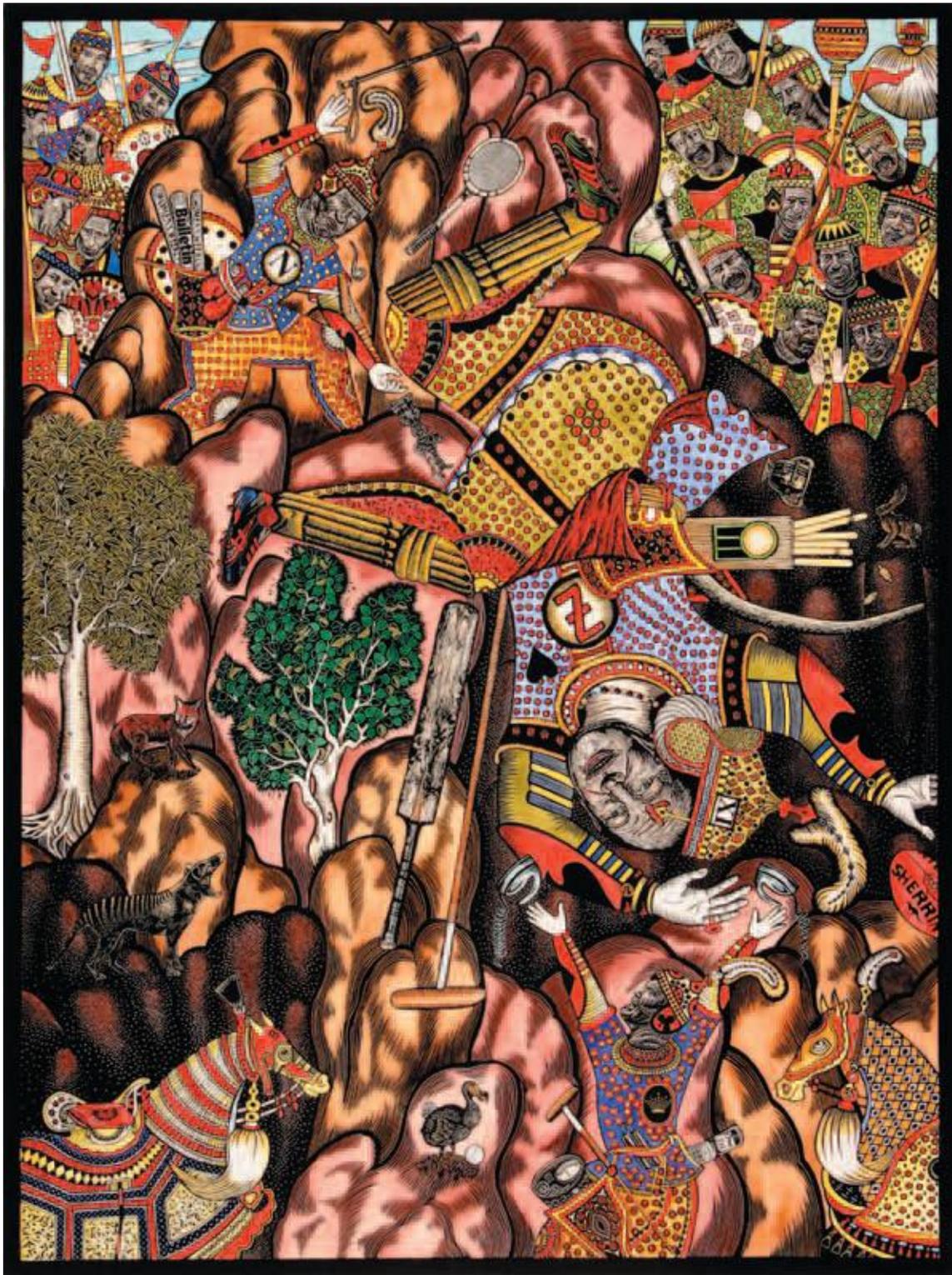
Courtesy of the artist and Legge Gallery, Sydney

CRITICAL STUDY

The protagonists in *It's Not Always Black or White* are the outspoken feminist Germaine Greer, dressed ironically as the lady of the house in an extremely feminine outfit complete with bows and hat, and Truganini, portrayed as the servant holding up the 'spoils of the hunt'.

CRITICAL STUDY

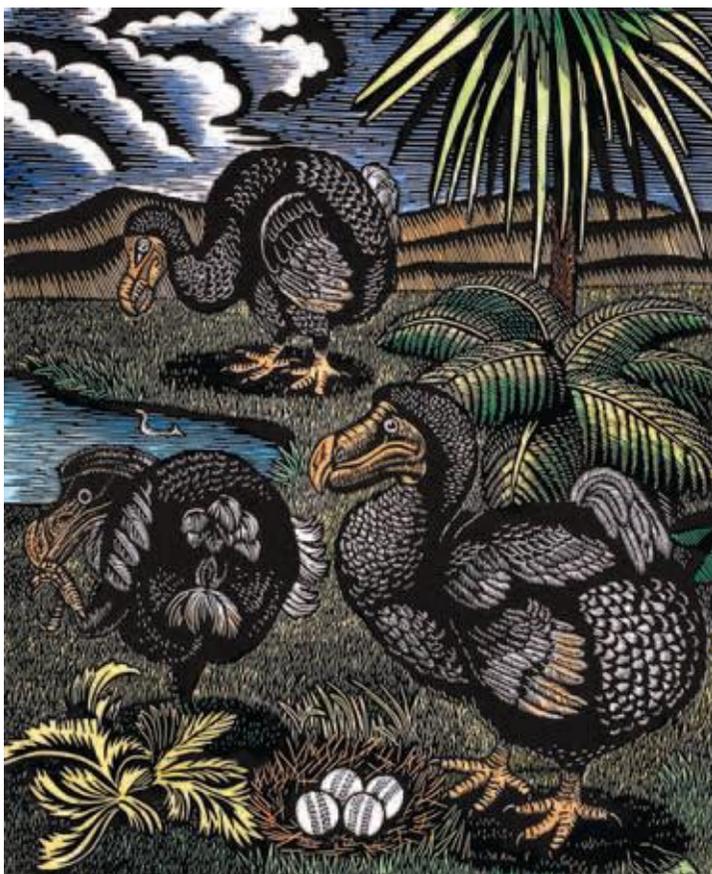
C'mon Kerry, C'mon C'mon is dense with cultural and political symbolism. As the title suggests, it is a witty, cutting statement about the media 'king' Kerry Packer and his interest in sport, the title referencing the sporting battle cry 'C'mon Aussie, C'mon C'mon'. (Note in the top left corner are editions of the *Bulletin* and the *Women's Weekly*. Included is sports equipment such as cricket pads and bats as well as rackets and a polo mallet. Polo, played mostly in India, England,



Argentina and Australia, has always been a sport for the rich and the elite. Within the highly intricate patterns and confusion of images can be found portraits of notable polo players as well as references to these cultures. The circular badge with an 'N' refers to the 'Nutmackers', the polo team of Kerry's father, Sir Frank Packer. The Z on a white background with a horizontal line through it represents the two teams Ellerston Black and Ellerston White (Kerry bought one for his son Jamie). Other symbols include the Tasmanian tiger, a reference to a reward offered by Packer to anyone who could provide evidence of the survival of the almost certainly extinct marsupial.

The artist's design is highly detailed, with intricate patterns and textural areas.

C'mon Kerry, C'mon C'mon 2006
101 × 76 cm
Courtesy of the artist
and Legge Gallery, Sydney



Packer's Pod 2006
28 × 23.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist
and Legge Gallery, Sydney

CRITICAL STUDY

At first *Packer's Pod* appears to depict a stylised scene based on nature, but on closer inspection we see the humorous side suggested in the title. The bird is the dodo, a flightless bird from Mauritius that was wiped out in the late seventeenth century, within some 70 years of European settlement of the island. The dodo has become an icon for extinction. With this representation of three generations of Packers, the artist seems to be raising the question of whether famous business dynasties might also be on their way to extinction or change. The cricket balls in the nest refer to the fact that all members of the SCG Trust were sacked by the former Labor Premier Neville Wran so that Packer's WSC would have the right to play at the Sydney Cricket Ground. The government funded the introduction of floodlights; the first day/night match was played between Australia and the West Indies in 1979, using white cricket balls to show up in the floodlights.

The dodo was also the symbol of the One.Tel phone company, which (before its 'extinction') caused financial problems for media barons Packer and Richard Murdoch.

Hanks has skilfully created a lively design through carving the lines in various directions to create areas of texture and a sense of depth in the grass. A decorative design, with fine lines and dots used to create a tonal effect, has been imbued with symbolism to create layers of meaning.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Rew Hanks' works involve dense layers of meaning, generally commenting on Australian politics through black humour and irony. His artworks are Postmodern in that they challenge history and pose questions relating to power, corruption, personal ambition and values. He creates witty, thought-provoking artworks that challenge us to think about, for example, environmental issues (e.g. the introduction of the cane toad), Indigenous issues, genetic engineering and politics.

Each artwork in the Packer series is rich in personal history of this famous family, from symbols of their commercial enterprises, such as Crown Casino, to more personal symbols such as Packer's kidney transplant. The format for several of the series betrays the influence of Indian miniature paintings. This series has obviously emerged from extensive research and personal absorption in the subject, and careful planning of the placement of images and symbols to create complex layering of meaning. The element of fantasy, hints of satire and unusual combination of images make these linocuts seem more like contemporary fables than realistic documentary. Hanks works on a large scale, with great realism and exacting precision, delicately hand colouring his works.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Write three sentences of critical writing about one of Hanks' linocut prints using some of the following words: *narrative, symbolism, detailed, pattern, political, extinct, ecological, imagery, intricate.*
- 2 'Rew Hanks' black and white linocut technique uses bold designs and intricate cutting.' Find evidence in his linocuts to support this statement. You may draw and label areas of his work rather than explaining in words.
- 3 Use a single bubble map (page xvi) to outline the main characteristics of the work of Rew Hanks.

Mona HATOUM

(b. 1952 Beirut, Lebanon, of Palestinian parents; lives and works in London)

FORM

sculpture

FRAMES

Postmodern and Cultural. Her works are concerned with political injustice and questioning power structures.

VOCABULARY

displacement removal from one's home; exile

oppression control, persecution and mistreatment backed by force

eBook plus

INTERVIEW WITH MONA HATOUM

Use the **Mona Hatoum interview** weblink in your eBookPLUS to listen to an interview with this artist.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Hatoum's artworks are non-traditional and politically confronting.



The title of this piece, *Grater Divide*, is of course a play on words. It represents a kitchen cheese grater, but it is the size and shape of a room divider; at the same time, it can be interpreted as representing the divide between the sexes and, more potently, between communities, countries and peoples. When seen in person this work evokes a sense of horror.

CRITICAL STUDY

Grater Divide 2002
mild steel
204 × 3.5 cm (variable width)
© Mona Hatoum
Photo: Iain Dickens
Courtesy of White Cube

In *Doormat* (page 130), a symbol of domesticity and hospitality has become something threatening, like a weapon. This is similar in concept to another work, *No Way*, in which she plugged the holes of a kitchen strainer with bolts to comment on the restrictions on freedom of movement for Palestinians in Jerusalem.

CRITICAL STUDY



Doormat 1996
stainless steel and nickel-plated pins,
glue and canvas
71 × 40.5 × 3 cm
© Mona Hatoum
Photo: Stephen White
Courtesy of White Cube

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Mona Hatoum grew up in Beirut, Lebanon. Her family are Palestinian. She was on a visit to London in 1975 when civil war broke out in Lebanon, preventing her return and beginning her exile. She is now based in Germany and Britain. Her artworks have been influenced by the political situation in her homeland and the suffering of Palestinians, and by her experience of living in a new country. Power and identity are the main themes in her work. Based on her experiences of institutional power, violence and threats, her work includes performances, sculptures, video works and large-scale installations. She invariably uses non-traditional and unexpected materials.

Her sculptures are often grouped together in the gallery space to create a mood. Near *Grater Divide* when exhibited at the MCA, Sydney, Hatoum placed her sculpture *Incommunicado*, a hospital crib made from stainless steel. Instead of a mattress, taut, thin wires stretched across the crib like an egg-slicer. The cot, with its cold metal bars, resembles a prison cell or instrument of torture. What should be comfortable and soothing instead suggests danger, pain and abuse. In *Marrow* 1996, a baby's bed made from floppy rubber has collapsed to the floor, while *Silence* 1994 presents a version of the baby's crib made from glass tubing.

The crib series links with other works of hers related to furniture pieces, all of which have a common theme: something that should provide support

eBookplus

MONA HATOUM

Use the **Mona Hatoum** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a biography and a series of selected works of this artist.

and comfort to the body is transformed into a symbol of violence, threat or hostility. For *Lily (Stay) Put* 1996, Hatoum attached castors to a metal bed, then immobilised it by tying it down to the floor with fishing wire, to symbolise social control and restricted freedom. Similarly, at first glance *Untitled (Wheelchair)* 1998 is simply a metal wheelchair, albeit one without the comfort of padding, but its meaning is more sinister. The handles to push it have been sharpened into blades that would cut any person attempting to grasp them. Hatoum seems to be reminding us of the body's fragility. An object of convenience to the disabled has become a weapon. This piece was exhibited in the Art Gallery of New South Wales among other objects whose function had been altered, their form and purpose transformed in some way, such as a pair of crutches made from a soft, pliable substance that would offer no support to their user.

Mona Hatoum often repurposes an object in a different way in another artwork: kitchen utensils in *Homebound* have become separate artworks; a cheese grater is enlarged to become a room divider. Hatoum challenges the audience to make the connections between inanimate objects and social or political situations.

Mona Hatoum's first artwork with the function of social/political comment was her performance work *Under Siege* 1982, in which she was confined within a small transparent cubicle similar to a shower recess and was covered in liquid clay. For a day she slipped, fell over and tried to stand to symbolise the life struggles of a person trying to survive in a harsh and unfamiliar environment. The accompanying soundtrack spoke of war and invasion, and people's helplessness in the face of such events. Hatoum's body symbolised all humanity. Her underlying message is that we cannot always control our immediate environment or the world around us. Viewers were in the position of helpless bystanders and saw Hatoum as the victim. Although the audience reacts to her work on a personal level, she often tries to create a barrier between the artwork and the audience, as in *Homebound* 2000, where the whole installation space is cordoned off behind a wire fence. What at first seems to be an arrangement of rejected kitchen and household utensils and furniture is actually wired to an electric current. There is an obvious sense of threat, danger and anger in her works.

Mona Hatoum makes powerful statements about her personal responses to **displacement** and political **oppression**.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Explain how Hatoum has changed everyday objects into objects of threat and violence.
- 2 Use one of her sculptures as inspiration for a horror short story.
- 3 Evaluate the importance of scale, materials and symbolism in the expression of meaning in Hatoum's work.
- 4 Hatoum's works have been described as 'thrilling but chilling ... an uncomfortable experience'. How do you interpret this comment?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- 1 There is a morbid side to Hatoum's work, a hint of danger and death. Look for similarities in approach to the work of Damien Hirst (page 55).
- 2 Claes Oldenburg, the Pop art sculptor, has also changed the media and scale of everyday objects to create artworks that reflect his society. How were they different in mood, meaning and purpose from Hatoum's art practice?

ARTMAKING

Transform an everyday object to change its function and suggest a mood, be it fanciful, witty or political. Or you could list the attributes of two dissimilar objects and combine them into a single object.

or

Manipulate an everyday object that you have scanned into the computer to transform it into a weapon or to suggest a sense of violence. Write an evaluation of this work in your Process Diary (perhaps using a PMI chart; page xv).

Shona WILSON

[b. 1964, Australian]

FORM

assemblages

FRAME

Structural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Shona Wilson interprets the natural world using simplified forms and repetition and a sensitive concern for textural surfaces.

VOCABULARY

assemblage three-dimensional work made by combining different materials

intriguing exciting curiosity or interest

eBookplus

SHONA WILSON ONLINE

Use the **Shona Wilson** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit this artist's official website.



Sea Pelt II 2000

assemblage

Photo: Greg Weight

Courtesy of the artist and

Michael Nagy Fine Art

CRITICAL STUDY

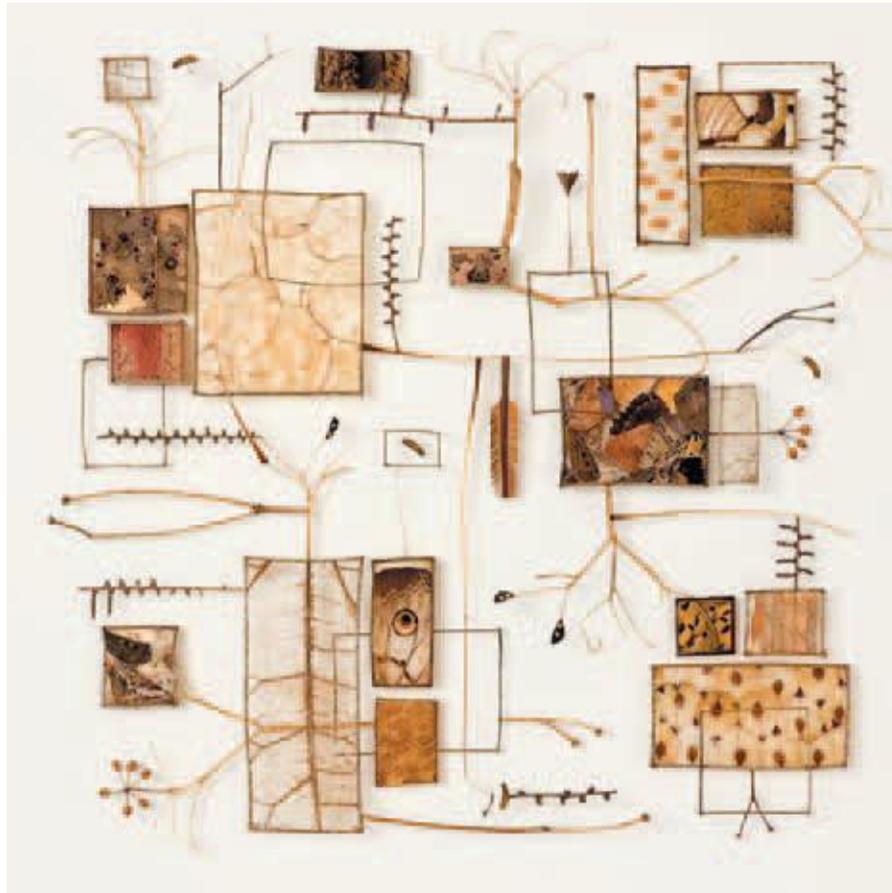
From first glance, the viewer is aware that the semi-transparent, repeated shapes of *Sea Pelt II* belong to nature somehow. The artist has collected and transformed bluebottle jellyfish — the stinging sea creatures that sometimes litter Australian beaches — to create a beautiful and subtle play of colour and shape. The

bluebottles have been flattened, preserved and joined together to form an **intriguing** all-over pattern — a delicate rhythm of transparent and soft pastel surfaces. The artist has created an exquisite patchwork from the debris (fragments or rubbish) of the sea.

In *Sea Pelt I*, seaweed was finely stretched and sewn together to resemble weathered skin. Recognising what each artwork is made from merely adds to their allure. It also makes us appreciate Shona Wilson's extraordinary creative vision, patience, determination and technical skill.



Shona Wilson in the studio
Photo: Dave Sparkes
Courtesy of the artist



Gathering No. 4 2008
wings, seedpods, branchlets, leaves,
feather and fern
55 × 55 × 7 cm (framed)
Photo: Moshe Rosenzweig
Courtesy of the artist and King St Gallery
on William, Sydney

It is the pattern and beauty of the surfaces that first attract us to these artworks then hold our interest as we appreciate the delicate structure and intricacy of their construction. There is a gentle flow within the work, our eye travelling along the fine branches from one focal point to another. Shona Wilson persuades us to look closely and be amazed by the variety and delicacy of pattern and texture to be found in nature, particularly as it decomposes. There is an intimacy and playfulness in her work, which links personal memories, cultural histories, and her innate imaginative and creative powers.

The repetitive use of nature's detritus brings me closer to understanding the world I share. Forms and structures within nature inform all man-made architectures. These materials are themselves storehouses of knowledge and information.

Artist's statements

'My work practice incorporates drawing, ceramics and miniature/large-scale multimedia works. Collections are an integral [necessary, essential] part of my process. They indicate a journey, a diversity of activity and the passage of time.

CRITICAL STUDY

Shona Wilson, catalogue for
Paradise Found exhibition



***Patterning 8* 2007**

bark, fern and seedpods

67 × 67 × 8 cm

Photo: Moshe Rosenzweig

Courtesy of the artist and King St Gallery
on William, Sydney

‘Exploration of nature, both real and imagined, especially in relation to the microscopic level of its activity, is my main inspiration. Where life becomes pattern and repetition, edges disappear and form quivers in “every-day” quality, and as such their arrangement/rearrangement becomes a kind of “psychic mapping”.’

Quoted in Michael Nagy Fine Art Gallery catalogue, November 2000

‘Due to my history of installation work, I perceive the showing space as a whole environment to be engaged with. There is an obvious tension created between the two series, the solidity and density of the ceramics juxtaposed [placed side by side] with the light playfulness of the **assemblages**. It is this dynamic, and the repeated plays of opposites in the individual works themselves, which gives the show its layers of meaning and a presence which seeks an experience of wholeness and wonder.’

Transcript from a talk by the artist to the Australian Art Collector Society, December 1998

Shona Wilson completed a degree in sculpture at Sydney College of the Arts in 1990. Her work relates closely to nature. In this respect she has been strongly influenced by the artist Andy Goldsworthy (see 'Further research' below for websites to view his art).

Collecting is an integral part of Wilson's work and she tends to work along with the seasons, collecting in the summer and autumn and creating during the winter. Her starting point for her works is the material, rather than an idea or shape.

Shona Wilson has worked in two divergent yet strangely complementary forms, which she displays together, creating both variety and balance. One form is the hand-built sculptural clay vessels — sleek, simple ceramic, precariously balanced forms. The other is the fragile assemblages, which emphasise repetition and detail. Of late she is concentrating increasingly on these delicate assemblages. The vessels, in their subtle texture and refinement, relate to the accompanying assemblages arranged in fine grids. There is a play on organic substances and their patterns, such as hydrangea flowers in various stages of losing their colour, creating a delicate, all-over pattern. Decaying leaves and butterfly wings are also incorporated, attached to delicate frames made from fine twigs (actually aerial roots) and mounted in relief in white, perspex-covered boxes. Another work is made from fish scales. The everyday object is selected and made miraculous by its presentation.

The arrangements remind us of both the paintings of Klee, with their fine patterns of delicate squares, and the cataloguing and display found in natural history museums. The same sort of care is taken with their arrangement and display. The onlooker is drawn to their preciousness. Shona Wilson's interest in the concept of preservation can be seen in such works as *Sea Pelt I* and *II*. The viewer becomes involved in their own memories of experiences with these natural, once-living things.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Use the following three words in sentences to describe Shona Wilson's work: *repetition*, *delicate*, *texture*.
- 2 The critical writing on *Sea Pelt II* is from the *Subjective Frame*. Find instances of:
 - (a) personal reactions
 - (b) emotional writing
 - (c) personal opinion.

Historical study

- 3 Why is collecting an important part of Shona Wilson's artmaking practice?

FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1 The work of Australian artist Rosalie Gascoigne is also concerned with arranging collections of objects. Find examples of her work then consider the similarities and differences between her work and Shona Wilson's. Use a Venn diagram to organise your thoughts (page xviii).

eBookplus

- 2 The British artist Andy Goldsworthy makes site-specific artworks and sculptures using raw materials from nature. Use the **Andy Goldsworthy** weblinks in your eBookPLUS to view some of his creations then discuss the similarities you see between Goldsworthy's art and that of Shona Wilson.

ARTMAKING

Collect natural objects and make them into a hanging relief sculpture, or transform the surface of a variety of small boxes with pieces from your collection. As a class, conduct a peer evaluation of your works. You might like to do a PMI of your favourite one.

Alasdair MACINTYRE

(b. 1970 in Brisbane, Australian)

FORMS

sculptural tableaux or dioramas, small-scale sculptural models, enlarged figures

eBook plus

ELESSON: INTERVIEW WITH ALASDAIR MACINTYRE

Alasdair Macintyre offers insights into his work and inspiration. A transcript of the full interview is also available in your eBookPLUS.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES-0727

FRAMES

Postmodern in the way he challenges us and warns us of the future, often reinterpreting art and artists from the past; *Cultural* in his subjects

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The audience is intrigued by Macintyre's miniature interpretation of issues relevant in his world.



Jab 2009

polyurethane resin, polymer clay, wood, cardboard, inkjet print, acrylic paint, plastic acrylic
23 × 38 × 24 cm

Courtesy of the artist and
Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art, Sydney

CRITICAL STUDY

In *Jab* the artist is being given an injection of 'postmodern angst', a serum to help him get over his artist's creative block (just as writers experience writer's block, when they find it hard to start writing, to be creative). The humour is obvious here, but as in all of Macintyre's works there are various symbols to be deciphered to understand the intellectual layering of references as well as the personal concerns of the artist. The diploma on the wall has been awarded by South Splatsville Art Academy. The label on the serum reads, 'Postmodern Angst. To be inoculated by Postmodern experts only'. Another sign asks, 'Want longer lasting Art? Cerebral injection technologies available'. As with many of his works, the imagery and signage continue on the 'back'.

CRITICAL STUDY

Although *Monkey Business* (opposite) appears as a simple joke on the world of art galleries (curatorial team and acquisition policies), as in much of his work Macintyre is using satire to convey his views — in this case, a wry criticism. The drawing on the whiteboard, for instance, references research done in the 1950s on chimpanzees' 'drawing' in an attempt to study their intelligence levels.



Monkey Business 2009
polyurethane resin, polymer clay, wood,
inkjet print, cardboard, paper, felt, acrylic
paint, plastic acrylic
24.5 × 21.5 × 28.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

The miniature magazines all have personal significance to the artist: *Art Collector*, *50 most collectable artists* is a reminder of a goal the artist has yet to achieve, while the Australian art encyclopedia is open at the page of Macintyre's own entry. Every fine detail has a purpose and leads the viewer to solve the puzzle of the artwork's multiple meanings and to appreciate his humour when commenting on his personal involvement with the artworld.

Signifier/Signified references not only politics — the figure (glasses and stance) is an obvious model, or rather caricature, of former prime minister Kevin Rudd — but also the recent art debate on censorship around the photography of Australian artist Bill Henson.

CRITICAL STUDY

Alasdair Macintyre's artworks are unique.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Relatively small-scale, they engage the viewer, who not only appreciates the fine detail of his figures and objects but tries to decipher the narrative he constructs through the positions of the figures and the symbolic meaning of the objects. The miniature 'rooms' or 'events' he creates are diverse in their references and inspirations. His artworks often refer to mass culture (the Smurfs, Batman's 'Joker', U2 band members) or the artworld (his works on artist Ian Fairweather, Jeff Koon's 'Puppy', the art critic and historian Robert Hughes, and himself as artist), as well as to his own quirky slant on contemporary life. Some are more intellectual in their message than others, but all are amusing and demonstrate Macintyre's wit — for instance,

Signifier/Signified 2009

polymer clay, polyurethane resin,
inkjet print, paper, acrylic paint, cardboard
19 × 15 × 14 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art



Alasdair Macintyre at work in his studio, 2008
Photo: John Bean



his 2009 submission for the Wynne Prize of US President Obama dressed as Captain America. Although his figures are small and are usually placed in a confined environment that suggests a museum display diorama, they have an air of mystical power. As showcases or symbols of the wider world, they intrigue and delight the audience. With his own characterisation as the struggling artist (his alter-ego has become known as Aecap), usually accompanied by his pet dog, he uses himself as a symbol to comment not only on the artworld but on the plight of humanity and the human journey. Similarly, he uses a single soldier as a symbol for the war on Iraq.

Macintyre's works encourage reflection on contemporary events and how our culture is influenced by film, TV and popular music, as well as delving into issues of religion and what it means to be an artist in this competitive global society. Although the symbols and messages are often complex, once unravelled we appreciate his wit and sincerity.

Macintyre will often return to familiar themes or elements while extending the meaning or updating the context. 'Splatsville' appears repeatedly in his signage, suggesting a real place but, as the artist explains, actually referring to his own creative world, the realm of the artist.

Macintyre collects toys and figurines, casts them, manipulates them, casts them again, colours them and builds scale environments around them. This requires research and patience. Although at first glance the pieces may appear childlike, thoughtful consideration and dedication to detail and symbolism are involved in their creation. Through his careful observation, selection and composition he creates a narrative or witty critique of our world. One large figure sculpture often accompanies an exhibition.

eBook plus

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE
ONLINE

Use the **Alasdair Macintyre** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit this artist's official website.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Explain some of the main themes or symbols in Macintyre's work.
- 2 How does Macintyre's choice of scale influence the meaning of his works and the audience's response?
- 3 Macintyre uses dark humour to express the angst he feels in living in the Western world in the third millennium. In this sense, how is his work similar to Jaqueline Fraser's (page 62)?
- 4 Explain his work from the *Postmodern Frame*.

FURTHER RESEARCH ARTMAKING

Compare Alasdair Macintyre's works with the sculptural work of Ron Mueck, Alexander Seton (page 139) or Penny Byrne. Use a comparison chart or Venn diagram to organise your thoughts (page xviii).

- 1 Create small figures in clay within a setting to make a social, political or artistic comment.
- 2 You might like to use a cluster map to focus your ideas (page xii).

Alexander SETON

(b. 1977 in Sydney, Australian)

FORM

sculpture

FRAMES

Structural in his attention to technique; *Postmodern* in his questioning approach to the everyday objects of the contemporary world, and the contradictions between subject and method

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Seton's works amaze the viewer once they recognise the medium that has been used. His subject matter is his immediate world. His sculptures are art objects in their traditional, skilful craftsmanship.



eBookplus

ELESSON: INTERVIEW WITH ALEXANDER SETON

Alexander Seton offers insights into his work and inspiration. A transcript of the full interview is also available in your eBookPLUS.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: ELES-0729

Dancing Baby 2008
marble, Caesarstone, hardwood
145 × 75 × 116 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

Although the baby seems too small for this unmade bed, the reality of the object is accentuated. But all the areas we expect to be soft and yielding, such as the mattress and pillow, are actually carved from marble. This image of a sleeping baby should represent tenderness and fragility, a brief, fleeting stage of growth, but instead it is cold, lifeless and immortal. Through his meticulous, highly skilful carving of the traditional medium of marble and of caesarstone (manufactured mainly for kitchen bench tops), Seton not only confuses our perceptions but manages to bring this technique into the contemporary artworld in a powerful way.

You read the exhibition label and see an ordinary T-shirt on a marble hanger, and wonder if the 'artwork' is the red and black image on the front. Once you read the titles of some of the T-shirts — 'Strength', 'Skill', 'Courage', 'Wisdom' and the more playful 'All Work No Play', 'Avatar' and 'A Perfect Day' (an image of a crushed cigarette packet), and match them with the images, it starts to be more meaningful as you become aware of the visual puns. Then you realise with amazement that

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY



Viva La Republica! (front and verso)
Bianca marble, resin inlay, stainless steel
80 × 56 × 8 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Sullivan + Strumpf Fine Art

the whole garment is carved from marble. The temptation to touch is extremely strong. These sculptures definitely entice the audience with their strong tactile quality. You can't help but be in awe of the realism of the folds, the surface quality of the puckered material, the stitching and the way the garment falls as though it has just been taken from a dryer and hung up. You are struck by how such a heavy, durable material as marble can be made to look so flimsy. In the same exhibition is a table on which are arranged several piles of folded T-shirts. It is a display of the kind you might see in any clothing store. You are almost tempted to look for your size — until you notice the slightly crystalline sheen of the 'cloth'. Yes, these too are carved entirely out of marble!

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

The T-shirt is a popular manifestation of the fashion of young male adulthood. Self-expression through graphics, logos, statements political or otherwise. This declarative style of self-definition possesses the humour and sadness of rereading an old diary. The carved marble and synthetic stone shirts suggest the discomfort with the open public honesty of the age of Facebook and such social media. The robes of status on statues of old have become a thing of the past.

Alexander Seton, quoted in media release for the exhibition *Assembly*, July 2009, Sullivan+Strumpf Fine Art3

Alexander Seton has refined his artmaking skills through practical experience and symposiums in Australia and Europe. He is now a technical master carver of marble and synthetic stone materials. His great skill, meticulous approach and attention to detail combine to achieve the extraordinary realism of his works, which operate on the level of optical illusions. There is a sense of tension and contradiction between the subject matter, the objects as they exist in real life and their re-creation as art objects using traditional sculptural techniques. This adds to the layers of meaning these sculptures suggest. All the images on the T-shirts are in fact from sketches in his personal diary and thus relate to his own experiences and imagination over time.

Looking at a photograph of his work you could be fooled into believing that he uses real found objects. It is when you look at them up close and see the slight reflections of light that you have the sudden urge to touch the surface to prove to yourself that they are, as the wall labels state, carved from marble.

Seton's sculptures are not merely replicas of everyday objects, though. He makes choices in expressing his ideas. For example, his work *Self-censoring Helps Everyone* 2007 consists of a replica of a duvet wrapped up and held by masking tape and bearing the message 'Complexity is not a vice'. In this work, the duvet suggests a barrier or the armour we cloak ourselves with — the idea of security. There is also a cheeky, humorous side to his work — for example,

a chrome-legged chair with ‘upholstery’ in Italian white marble topped with an esky in Wombeyan (Australian) marble.

Alexander Seton’s works are generally life-size, as with the T-shirts and earlier work depicting sofas and mattresses, or oversized. His commission work has included a wedding gift of a carved pillow for Princess Mary of Denmark. It is Seton’s take on Hans Christian Andersen’s fairytale ‘The Princess and the Pea’.

Seton works in a sound-proof inner-city studio among pulleys and drills, working mainly with marble and synthetic stone. Essential to his practice is the need to wear breathing apparatus to protect his lungs from the fine dust.

Artist’s statement

‘My work explores the tension and often the contradiction of using traditional skill carving to express themes of the digital age. With carved marble, and using elements of photography, video, installation and the readymade, the various language structures of these mediums can be played off one another . . . The illusion of the work’s surface questions the nature of perception and choice. It is in the outrageously implausible marble realization of objects such as concrete barriers, couches, doonas, beanbags, toffee apples, etc. that the possible can be called to account.’

Alexander Seton, quoted in exhibition catalogue, sullivan+strumpf, 2008

‘Marketing hype often drives an artist’s early career, but it takes vision and talent to make a lasting impression. One artist destined to survive the ballyhoo is 28-year-old Alexander Seton, a sculptor whose work is based on humour and undeniable skill.’

Michael Reid, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Good Weekend, 30 July 2005

eBookplus

ALEXANDER SETON
ONLINE

Use the **Alexander Seton** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit this artist’s official website.

CRITICAL PRACTICE

STUDYING ART

- 1 If *Viva La Republica!* was actually a cotton T-shirt, would it still be an artwork? How has it gained significance and meaning by being carved in marble?
- 2 How is your understanding of the T-shirt sculptures increased by reading the artist’s statement in the media release accompanying the exhibition?
- 3 What feelings do you get when you see *Dancing Baby*? What does it make you think of?
- 4 Seton uses a reductive process in his sculptures, his choices concerned with what to leave behind in the block of marble. How does this differ from other artmaking processes you know about (such as drawing, painting, photography, ceramics)?
- 5 Read the critical review extract by Michael Reid and explain why you think it may be important for an artist to be written about by a critic.
- 6 Pop sculptor Claes Oldenburg created sculptures in which hard objects such as toilets, light switches and typewriters were transformed into sculptures made of soft materials such as vinyl, sewn canvas or padded cloth. Do you think Alexander Seton’s work may have been influenced by Oldenburg? If so, how?

FURTHER RESEARCH

What similarities and differences do you see between the work of Alexander Seton and that of Ricky Swallow? You might like to use a double bubble map to organise your thoughts (page xiii).

ESSAY QUESTION

‘Both Alexander Seton and Bernini [a seventeenth-century Italian Baroque artist] are master carvers of marble, and both reflect the culture, values and beliefs of their time.’ Evaluate this statement with reference to examples by both artists.

Glenn MURCUTT

(b. 1936, Australian)

Phillip COX

(b. 1939, Australian)

eBook plus

GLEN MURCUTT PORTFOLIO

Use the **Glen Murcutt** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a portfolio and works of this architect.

COX ARCHITECTS

Use the **Cox Architects** weblink in your eBookPLUS to visit the website of the architecture firm founded by Phillip Cox.

Bingi Farm, also known as **Magney House**

Built on the New South Wales south coast in 1984 by Glenn Murcutt

Photos: Anthony Browell



Architect Glenn Murcutt designs buildings to be in complete harmony with their environment. His inspiration is the Australian landscape and his philosophy is to 'touch the earth lightly'.

Murcutt is primarily concerned with domestic housing and small-scale commercial commissions. His best-known designs include the local history museum and tourist information centre at Kempsey and the Arthur and Yvonne Boyd Education Centre at Riversdale. He chooses colours and materials to suit the site. Each building is designed to fit into rather than interrupt the topography. For example, the Studio House at Glenorie, set in bushland, was placed clear of the ground on slender columns above rock foundations.

Murcutt often uses corrugated iron and weatherboard, learning from traditional Australian farmhouses. He reinterprets these old forms with intelligent concern for sun and wind control and views. There is a simplicity and elegance to his designs. They contain no ornament. Instead, their excitement lies in the balance of shapes, patterns and textures. He incorporates highly refined steel details and galvanised corrugated iron, with extensive use of glass and blinds.

For Bingi Farm, or Magney House as it is also known, Murcutt designed a gently curving roof to match the environment. Within the design, he considered the control of sunlight entering the house by means of movable walls and outside shutters. His plans are generally free-flowing and open, responding to the individual needs of his clients. The house has two sections: parents and children have living rooms opposite each other across a common courtyard. The curve of the roof adds movement and lightness, and links the building with the wave shapes of the sea in the distance. The curve is repeated in the shape of the door, adding an individuality to the building and providing a counterpoint to the straight lines.

In April 2002 Glenn Murcutt won the most prestigious international prize for architecture, the Pritzker Prize.

STUDYING ARCHITECTURE

- 1 What is unique about the houses that Glenn Murcutt designs?
- 2 What would be the advantages of having Murcutt design a house for you?
- 3 List or draw the different patterns and shapes he has used in the structure of the house shown opposite.
- 4 Glenn Murcutt's architecture is recognised around the world for its attention to the environment, landscape and climate. Use the **Glenn Murcutt** weblink to find out more about his work.
- 5 Think of an environment where you would like to build a home and sketch your own design for a building that is in harmony with that environment.

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Architect Phillip Cox combines imaginative design with an understanding of Australian style. The Sydney Football Stadium has a unique, continuous encircling roof that forms a spectacular 'saddle' shape. The external perimeter is a perfect circle. The playing field was constructed three metres below natural ground level to reduce the scale of the building from the outside. It seats 30 000 spectators. The sections of the continuous roof were made off-site and lifted into place in about two hours. Excavation commenced in May 1986 and the stadium opened in January 1988. The design is dynamic and innovative. There is a strong visual impact both inside and outside the building. It is enclosed and welcoming, yet not confining.

Phillip Cox established his practice, Phillip Cox and Associates, in 1967. His buildings are so wide-ranging that they are becoming known as the Australian style of public architecture. Among his many projects are the Melbourne Tennis

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY



Sydney Football Stadium 1986–88
Architect: Phillip Cox
Photo: Peter Barnes/Newspix

Centre, Yulara Tourist Resort near Uluru, the University of Technology campus in Sydney, the National Maritime Museum, the Aquarium and Exhibition space at Darling Harbour and several of the structures built for the Sydney Olympics 2000 at Homebush Bay.

Phillip Cox's architecture responds to our climate, landscape and culture. His main inspiration is Sydney Harbour itself. He has great reverence for the Australian landscape and its sense of space. Windmills and wire fences have inspired him to keep his designs as slender as possible. Cox's designs, particularly his roofs, are dynamic and unique, relying heavily on structure and usage rather than extravagance or ornament. Consider the variety of features he has incorporated in some of his best-known designs for public buildings — for example:

- the tall, billowing Maritime Museum
- the low, wave-shaped Sydney Aquarium
- the vast, pillar-free Exhibition Centre with white masks and cables suspending its roof
- the Melbourne Tennis Centre's movable roof
- Stadium Australia, the innovative main venue for the Olympics in 2000.

STUDYING ARCHITECTURE

- 1 How has each architect, Glenn Murcutt and Phillip Cox, designed his buildings in keeping with his concept of Australian identity?
- 2 How is each architect unique in his use of media and construction methods?
- 3 Write a critical review on one of Phillip Cox's buildings, including your own opinions and perhaps your personal experiences of using the building.
- 4 Cox designs mainly public buildings while Murcutt tends to design smaller, domestic structures (houses). What would be the main considerations for each of these types of buildings — that is, how would their purpose affect the design?



Where once architects worked mainly with consideration for the public, Rem Koolhaas recognises that private clients now dominate, and these corporate clients see architecture as a means of creating a sense of distinctness — a form of advertising. This building for Prada, New York, certainly fills that role as a symbol of individuality and glamour. The spectacular internal curved wooden ramp marries two floors of displays of clothing and accessories.

CRITICAL STUDY

Prada Epicenter in New York 2001

Total area: 2190 m²
 575 Broadway, New York
 Courtesy of the Office of Metropolitan Architecture, New York
 Photo: Armin Linke

Koolhaas has also designed stores for Prada in San Francisco and Los Angeles. For Seoul, in South Korea, Koolhaas created a Prada Transformer (a six-month installation on the grounds of the historic Gyeonghui Palace), a movable structure to house Prada fashion, art and film installations. Each of the four sides of the structure is a different shape — a circle, rectangle, cross or hexagon. To create an alternative interior for each event, the structure is lifted by a crane and rotated. The steel-framed pavilion is literally rolled over between exhibitions, creating a new floor plan and unique environment for each exhibition. The first exhibition in the Prada Transformer was of skirts from emerging Korean fashion students exhibited alongside Miuccia Prada skirts from her archive.

The capacity to change shape makes this building a fitting structure for a fashion house, the fashion industry being particularly subject to change, with a new collection twice a year. The Prada Transformer is a dynamic organism, rather than a static building. As the building is flipped over, each side takes on a different function: floors become walls, walls become ceilings, and so on.

The CCTV Building in Beijing, created in collaboration with the East China Architecture and Design Institute based in Shanghai, has two main sections. The innovative design and imposing presence was created to broadcast the Olympic Games. Although the height of a skyscraper, it does not follow their predictable rectilinear shape. Instead it is designed around a squared-off, upside-down intersection of right angles with a large space through its middle. This spectacular building, which seems to defy gravity, is a manifestation of both technical and social change. It reflects an awareness of globalisation, the sculptural shape being a universal statement of progress rather than an attempt to blend with the existing culture. Advances in digital software made such a unique design and its construction possible.

CRITICAL STUDY

eBookplus CCTV 3D

Use the **CCTV 3D** weblink in your eBookPLUS to watch a 3D tour of the CCTV headquarters, designed by Rem Koolhaas.



CCTV Building and the Television Cultural Centre (TVCC), Beijing, China, 2008

Photo: Frederic J. Brown
AFP/Getty Images

It does have something oddly disconcerting about it. It only struck me when the building was up and the tilting towers were joined together. It's the only building I know which is both foreground and background. It's entirely itself, but it remains in contact. It goes with the urban context. I also like its monumental fragility, which sometimes looks beautiful, sometimes old.

Koolhaas on this building, quoted in Hanno Rauterberg, *Talking Architecture*, Prestel Press, 2008, p. 100

ARCHITECT'S PRACTICE

Born in Rotterdam, Rem Koolhaas studied at the Architectural Association in London. He founded the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) in London in 1975.

Koolhaas's projects include the Guggenheim Museum in Los Vegas, the campus centre for the Illinois Institute of Architecture and the Bordeaux Villa in France. Perhaps his best-known buildings are the Dutch Embassy in Berlin, the Central Public Library in Seattle and the Casa da Musica in Oporto, Portugal. He has also worked in New York, Singapore and Dubai. As with many contemporary architects, he spends almost as much time in aeroplanes as in his home in London or his office in Rotterdam (where he has a staff of around 250).

Koolhaas is an architect who embraces advanced thinking, fully utilising the possibilities of computer-simulated design while also taking account of function and the demand for a sense of permanence. Sculptural designs such as the Seattle Public Library are possible in part because computers have altered our awareness of space and time. As society becomes more global and uniform, with the same shops and services in each city, there has been a greater demand for signature sculptural buildings such as those designed by Rem Koolhaas. His work embodies individualism in a digital age, responding to people's desire for



Seattle Public Library 2004
 Seattle, Washington, USA
 Photo: Art on File/Corbis

a sense of distinctiveness. Koolhaas is internationally renowned for his books as well as his architectural commissions. He has also worked as a journalist and screenwriter, and has suggested that ‘working on a building is like writing a screenplay. It’s all a matter of tension, atmosphere, rhythm, the right sequence of spatial impressions’.

Quoted in Hanno Rauterberg, *Talking Architecture*, Prestel Press, 2008, p. 103

Architect’s statement

‘The world of architecture has radically changed in only 15 years . . . I think that what we’re experiencing is the global triumph of eccentricity. Lots of extravagant buildings are being built, buildings that have no meaning, no functionality. It’s rather about spectacular shapes and, of course, the architects’ egos.’

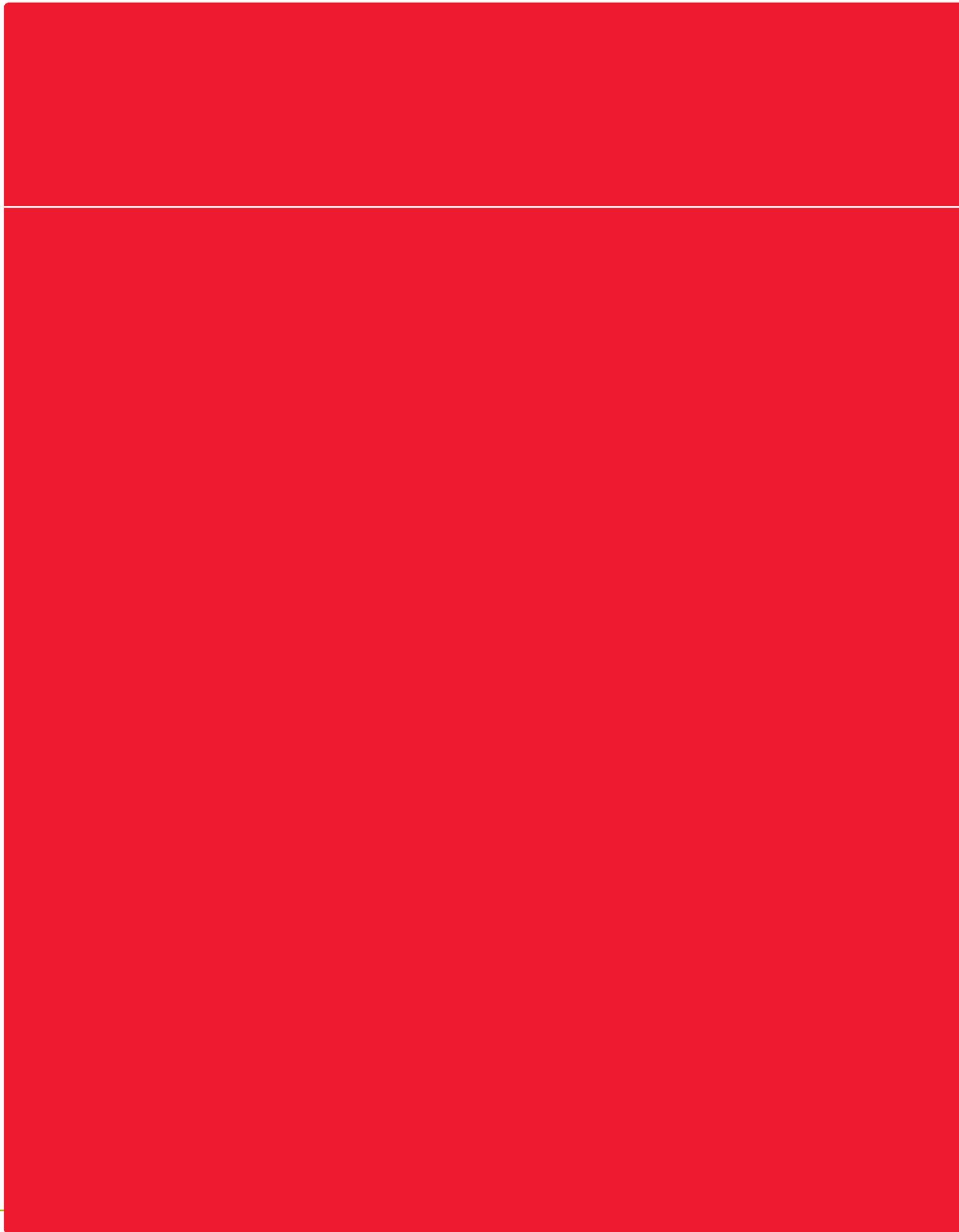
Rem Koolhaas talks about contemporary architecture, architectural experimentation and the media’s reference to ‘star architects’, quoted in Hanno Rauterberg. *Talking Architecture*, Prestel Press, 2008, p. 97

STUDYING ART

- 1 Koolhaas has stated that he is interested in complexity and structure, combining the rational with the irrational. How do you see this in his buildings?
- 2 Koolhaas has said that Surrealism has influenced him. What evidence do you see of this in his designs? (Look at Surrealist art on page 200.)

ESSAY QUESTION

Discuss the contemporary trend in architecture towards designing ‘spectacular shapes’. Consider the work of Rem Koolhaas and another architect of your choice. Suggestions: Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Santiago Calatrava, Renzo Piano, Neil M. Denari, Kunsthaus Graz.



HISTORICAL ART PERIODS/STYLES

GREEK AND RENAISSANCE ART

LIST OF ARTISTS

Greek art

Polykleitos and Myron p. 151

Proto and Early Renaissance art

Giotto p. 154

Masaccio and Andrea Mantegna
p. 157**High Renaissance art**

Leonardo da Vinci p. 160

Raphael p. 163

Michelangelo p. 166

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INTERACTIVITY:

VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2192

Greek art

An understanding of Classical Greek art is important as it forms the basis for interpretations of the human body throughout the history of Western art. It was the artists of classical Greece who set the standards of beauty of the human form, establishing the 'ideal' proportions of the body, creating the relaxed pose called *contrapposto*, in which the weight is thrown onto one foot, and representing the nude as a symbol of beauty. Although examples of Greek painting have survived, for instance in pot decoration, it is in classical sculpture that we can truly appreciate their striving for the ideal body form and their skill in rendering a three-dimensional body while appreciating the space around and between different parts of the figure. This sense of representing the human form as natural within its world began a narrative that influenced the Renaissance and art periods to follow. We refer to the art of ancient Greece and Rome as Classical Art. Without recognising these progenitors of Western art, it is hard to appreciate how the Modernists broke these traditions and how the Postmodernists make reference to past art in order to challenge accepted values and history itself.

Renaissance art

The term *Renaissance*, meaning 'rebirth', refers to the revival of interest in ancient Greek and Roman culture and learning that arose in Italy in the fourteenth century. It came to be applied to a period of far-reaching change that extended into the sixteenth century. During the Renaissance period people began to look at themselves and the world around them in a very different way. Renaissance ideas emphasised people's relationship with one another as well as with God. There was an awakened interest in human values and a growing belief in the importance of learning and the powers of reason. This way of thinking, which drew much of its inspiration from classical writings, is known as humanism. Renaissance artists were interested in anatomy and solid form, depicting the figure in an infinite variety of positions. They were also interested in perspective and the illusion of space, used more intense and varied colours, and introduced subtler light and shadow and much greater detail.



Michelangelo

The Prophet Jonah 1511–12

fresco

400 × 380 cm

Sistine Chapel, Vatican

© 1990, Photo Scala, Florence

POLYKLEITOS and MYRON

(Classical period, c. 480–350 BCE)

FORM

sculpture

FRAMES

Structural, Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

These sculptures are the artists' representation of the perfect human form. In their world, where warriors and athletes were revered, physical perfection provided a link to the gods.

VOCABULARY

contrapposto posture in which the shoulders and chest are turned slightly one way, the hips and legs another, with the weight resting mainly on one leg

harmony pleasing combination of different parts

idealised presented in an ideal form, without imperfections

in the round three-dimensional, viewable from all sides

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SCULPTURE AND ART IN ANCIENT GREECE

Use the **Ancient Greece** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about sculpture and art in Ancient Greece.



Polykleitos

Doryphoros

Roman marble copy of a lost Greek bronze by Polykleitos
Museo Nazionale, Naples

In this work by Polykleitos we have a sculpture **in the round** of a nude male in a relaxed pose, with his weight on one foot while the other knee is bent. He is a youth with an athletic, well-proportioned body. The feeling created by the sculpture is one of calm. There is no emotion on the face.

CRITICAL STUDY



Myron
Discobolus (*Discus Thrower*)
Copy of a Greek original (plaster)
by Myron (c. 450 BCE)
Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome

CRITICAL STUDY

Myron was particularly known for his skill in depicting movement and the muscles involved in physical action. If you look carefully you can see that *Discobolus* is composed of two opposing arcs to create the fluidity of the action. This is an **idealised** figure of a male nude in an athletic pose. (Remember that the Olympic Games began in Greece, and sport was also considered an important part of training for warfare.) He is young, slender and perfectly proportioned. Despite the movement shown, there is no emotion on his face; rather, there is a sense of calm control. It is realistic but not a likeness of a particular individual.

HISTORICAL STUDY

These sculptures by Polykleitos and Myron are examples from the beginning of what is often referred to as the 'golden age' of Greek art, the Greek Classical period (c. 480–350 BCE). By this stage sculptors had achieved mastery over the technical aspects of sculpture, creating relaxed figures with correct anatomy. They had learned how to include negative space (the space between limbs) and had started to develop an 'ideal' figure based on certain proportions to capture physical beauty and harmony. Typically, a man's face has a perfectly straight nose, curly hair and a calm expression, while his body is lean and muscular, with no excess body fat or irregularities of features (big feet, knobby knees etc.). To the Greeks, physical perfection indicated perfection of the soul and created a link to the gods. Their sculptures were therefore idealised. Myron is best known for his skilful rendering of human anatomy to show muscular movement and action, while Polykleitos is credited with developing a system for representing the human body. According to this system, the head should be one-seventh of the figure's height; the foot should be three times the length of the palm of the hand; and the length of the leg from foot to knee and the distance between the knee and the centre of the abdomen should be six times the length of the palm of the hand.

The figures often had their weight on one foot, raising one hip and dropping a shoulder (an S-bend). When this weight shift causes a slight turn to the body it is generally termed **contrapposto**. This technique was later adopted by artists of the Renaissance. Athletics was taken very seriously in Classical Greece, with competitive games taking place as part of religious festivals. Of these competitions, the most important was the Olympic Games, held at Olympia every four years in honour of Zeus, god of the sky and king of all the gods. Sport was also considered important training for warfare. Greek sculptors were moving towards naturalism, but they were less interested in individuals than in a universal approach to representation. Thus all young men were portrayed as tall, lean, muscular and perfectly proportioned, and all young women as sturdy and healthy. All, too, appear serene, calm and relaxed.

The main concerns of Classical Greek sculpture, therefore, were physical beauty and a sense of **harmony**, rather than individual difference and expression. Generally the figures were carved in more interesting positions than the rigid, front-on statues of Egypt and the earlier Archaic Greek period. Most works of sculpture were displayed on a pedestal (stand) so they could be viewed from all sides.

Another Classical Greek sculptor was Pheidias. Sculptures of the following Greek era, called the Hellenistic period, tended to show rather more emotional range with stronger movement and some individuality, as in the work of Praxiteles.

The Classical Greek sculpture became a model for later art periods, such as the Classical Roman era, the Renaissance, and the Neoclassical and early Modernist periods. You can even find evidence of influences of the idealised Greek face in some Indian Buddhist sculpture.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Subjective Frame** — personal response
Stand in the position of the figure in the sculpture by Polykleitos and describe how you feel.
- 2 Cultural Frame** — values, beliefs, lifestyle
Athletes performed naked in the Olympic Games. What effect do you think this would have had on their views on nudity? How might it have influenced their ideas of physical perfection?
- 3 Cultural Frame**
In what ways does Greek sculpture reflect the beliefs, values and lifestyle of the ancient Greeks?
Structural Frame
- 4** Try to draw one of these pieces of sculpture from another angle. Add a description of your drawing.
- 5** Write two sentences explaining the main characteristics of Classical Greek sculpture.
- 6** Why is Myron's sculpture a convincing representation of a person throwing a discus?
- 7** In order to depict human sculptural form, Polykleitos devised certain rules of proportion. What effect do you think these 'rules' would have had on the development of a sculptural style? Before you answer you might like to look up other examples of Greek sculpture in art books or on the internet.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Historical study

Cultural Frame — beliefs

- 1** For the Greeks, divinity found its expression in beings who were immortal but dwelt in bodies that were simply larger, perfect versions of the human form. Do an internet search of 'Greek mythology' to find images of two Greek gods or goddesses. Search words could include Apollo, Dionysus, Poseidon, Aphrodite, Athena. Write a brief description of each.
- 2** Look at Greek art in more depth for evidence of the development of Greek sculpture. How did the representation of the human figure change from the early Archaic to the Classical and finally the Hellenistic period?
- 3** Find an example of a work by the Renaissance sculptor Donatello. In what ways do you think Donatello was influenced by the work of ancient Greek sculptors such as Polykleitos? In what ways does the work of Renaissance sculptors differ from the work of ancient Greek sculptors?

ARTMAKING

- 1** Draw from life a person (perhaps one of your classmates) in the same pose as one of the sculptures. Move around the model and draw it from several viewpoints.
- 2** Create a sculpture of a figure in action using materials such as wire and papier-mâché; wire and plaster; or clay. As a starting point, create a mind map of different action positions in your Process Diary. Include preliminary sketches, perhaps working from photographs of sports stars in the newspaper.
- 3** Using computer graphics software, draw a human figure according to the rules of proportion developed by Polykleitos, as described in the text. Write a paragraph commenting on your results.

FORM

fresco painting

FRAMES

Structural, Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The Lamentation of Christ is the artist's own interpretation of the death of Christ. It depicts with compassion an emotional moment. Having the figures so close to the front creates a strong link with the viewer. Giotto's art reflects the social changes of his time, particularly in people's attitude towards religion, the importance of the individual and the new desire to understand their world.

VOCABULARY

Classical describes ancient Greek and Roman art
composition the placement or organisation of figures and objects in an artwork

dramatic like a play; containing drama, emotion or conflict

expression indication of emotion on the face

perspective way of seeing. In *aerial perspective* distant objects are lighter and bluer in tone, with softer edges. *Linear perspective* is a geometrical method of representing spatial relationships and depth on a two-dimensional surface by drawing lines that converge on a vanishing point.

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GIOTTO: WORKS

Use the **Giotto** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works by this artist.

CRITICAL STUDY

With its symbolic haloes and angels, *The Lamentation of Christ* is obviously a religious painting. It tells a religious story with emotion and human sympathy. Even the angels are arranged in a variety of positions, responding to the drama below. Look at the different positions of the heads of the people, some tilted upwards, some in profile, one with her hand to her face, yet all focused on the dead Christ. People are huddled around Christ, seated, kneeling, bending over or looking on, and women are crying. Each face is individual and shows **expression**. One of the ways in which Giotto depicted emotion was to have two faces confronting each other; here Mary's face is close to Jesus. Hand gestures are another important way to add to the story and the emotion being expressed.

Beneath the robes the figures appear solid. This is achieved through Giotto's use of tone and his clever rendering of folds to show how the fabric clings to shoulders and hips and falls free elsewhere. Giotto has not painted the background the usual flat gold but has added objects from nature, including rocks and trees. This provides a real-life context even though the background looks like a shallow stage set.

Although the rocks are somewhat unrealistic, lacking in detail of texture and shadow, and the tree is without leaves, the artist has attempted to place the figures in a natural setting to infuse this religious story with a sense of reality.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Giotto di Bondone, from Florence, in Italy, is widely acknowledged as the founder or originator of Renaissance painting. His painting style is thus usually termed Proto-Renaissance (meaning the first or earliest form of the Renaissance). This work represents a clear transition between the flat symbolism of Medieval art and the naturalism of individual figures, dressed in the clothing of their times within the deep space of the natural world, that we see in the High Renaissance period.

Giotto's naturalism and the emotional and **dramatic** power of his work were new at the time. For the first time in Christian art, people are shown as individuals in natural poses. Previously, figures were unrealistic and always faced forwards. They generally represented important religious figures, wore haloes and were set against a gold or one-colour background. Giotto attempted to include a natural background and a sense of space. His work led to the development of the new Renaissance style of painting based on realism.

As a boy, Giotto was apprenticed to an artist in Florence called Cimabue, who was the first painter of the period to absorb into his work the influence of **Classical** Greek and Roman art.



Giotto's work shows elements of the main characteristics of Renaissance art, including:

- (a) natural poses of figures
- (b) portrayal of individual faces
- (c) depiction of depth and **perspective**
- (d) natural light and shade to model figures (solidness)
- (e) observation of nature
- (f) balanced **composition** — often in a triangular shape.

The Lamentation of Christ is a detail, just one scene from the art that covers the walls and ceiling of the Arena Chapel. Giotto's theme was 'the redemption of mankind'. The story runs clockwise along the walls and down in three tiers or levels. It was painted using the fresco technique: artists painted on wet plaster so the pigment soaked into the surface. Because the fresh plaster dried quickly, artists had to plan their work carefully. New plaster was applied for each day's painting session, so the work proceeded in sections.

The Lamentation of Christ 1303–05
fresco
184 × 200 cm
Scrovegni (Arena) Chapel, Padua, Italy
The Bridgeman Art Library

Critical study*Subjective Frame*

- 1 Giotto was able to depict human emotions. Describe the emotions you see in this artwork.
- 2 Why do you think his paintings are called 'dramatic'?

Structural Frame

- 3 Symbols are used to represent religious elements. For example, the shape of an upturned begging bowl represents Buddhism; a cross or fish represents Christianity; a dove represents peace. List any symbols of religion you can see in *The Lamentation of Christ*.
- 4 How has Giotto made the figures appear to have weight and solidity?

Historical study*Cultural Frame — Conceptual Framework*

- 5 What social changes were taking place in the fourteenth century? What were the changes in attitude towards religion?
- 6 Acrylic and oil paints were not available in Giotto's time. Giotto painted the walls of the Arena Chapel using the fresco technique. How do you think this affected the style of his work? What other differences in artmaking practice would there have been for Giotto compared with today's artists?

ARTMAKING

1 Subjective Frame

Look at the expressions on the faces in this fresco. The people are mourning the dead Christ. How do you think they feel? Take a digital photograph of your face or a friend's face. Using software such as Photoshop, experiment with the features and manipulate the image to change the facial expression. Add captions to each expression, describing the emotion expressed.

Postmodern Frame

- 2 Copy the positions of the figures in *The Lamentation of Christ* but place them in a contemporary setting, such as the aftermath of a street fight.
- 3 Scan this artwork and use Photoshop to change its setting to a contemporary one.

In what ways is this painting stiff, unnatural and symbolic, and in what ways is it naturalistic and humanistic?

MASACCIO

[c.1401–1428, Italian]

Andrea MANTEGNA

[c. 1431–1506, Italian]

FORM

Masaccio — fresco painting;
Mantegna — painting

FRAMES

Structural, Cultural

VOCABULARY

aerial perspective technique that makes distant objects lighter and bluer in tone

foreshortening applying perspective so that objects or parts of the body that are closer are depicted as larger

linear perspective technique that represents depth by drawing lines that converge on a vanishing point

model to blend light to dark to create three-dimensional solidity

narrative story

pathos a quality that arouses a feeling of pity or sadness

Renaissance (art) inspired by the rediscovery of classical Greek and Roman ideals; the Renaissance art movement saw a growing emphasis on humankind and nature rather than on religious subjects alone

unify work as one, bring together

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

These are the artists' own interpretations of a religious story. Having the figures so close to the 'front' produces a strong link with the viewer.

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MASACCIO

Use the **Masaccio** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works by this artist.

ANDREA MANTEGNA

Use the **Andrea Mantegna** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the art and life of this artist.



This is a further development in realism from the work of Giotto. Masaccio's clothes reflect the fashion of the day. The figures communicate with each other through looks and hand movements. The faces show individual character and expression. Masaccio has used light and shade, giving the figures a feeling of solidity. No longer are all the figures at the front of the painting. There is now a figure in the middle distance. Our eye is led backwards by the lines in the architecture and the gradual reduction in height of the trees (**linear perspective**). Softening the edges of objects in the distance, leaving out detail and using a bluish-grey colour (**aerial perspective**) create the deep space in the painting.

This painting is of the New Testament story of Christ requesting Peter to take a coin from the mouth of a fish (on the left) to pay the tax collector (on the right). It is in the form of a continuous **narrative**, representing three stages of the story in a single image.

CRITICAL STUDY

Masaccio

The Tribute Money c. 1427

fresco

640 × 1463 cm

Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence

Masaccio has represented a religious story using real figures in an everyday environment. In this painting we can appreciate that the artist has taken another step towards the realism that reaches perfection in the work of High **Renaissance** artists such as Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci.

CRITICAL STUDY

In the painting by Mantegna below we are confronted with the body of the dead Christ, but this is not the traditional depiction of Christ on the cross; instead, our perspective is more personal, as we view the body from the foot of his bed. At first glance we see a realistic painting of a body from an unusual viewpoint, then we notice the nail holes in the feet and hands, the symbols of Christ's suffering. A faint halo can just be made out above Christ's head. The striking realism created by the skilful **foreshortening** and modelling of the folds of the sheet, as well as the attention paid to the anatomy of the chest, add to the sadness we feel for the tragedy that has taken place. The break in the composition's symmetry created by placing the mourners in one corner adds to the feeling of unease. Mantegna has also made the feet smaller than they should be so we can still see the face and thus relate to the scene on an intimate level. It is a powerful image of religious devotion as well as a universal symbol of **pathos**.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Masaccio and Mantegna are Early Renaissance artists. Humanism, a philosophy that stresses human rather than only religious concerns, was a great influence on art and society. Artists were attempting to depict religious stories with real people in realistic settings. Masaccio's main importance as an Early Renaissance artist was his introduction of a single light source from one side. By this means he was able to **model** his forms and **unify** his composition. A major change was the new sense of depth in the painting. He took Giotto's representation of people as individuals further, introducing greater variation in their clothing and having groups of people relating to each other. He also took another step towards depicting depth, leading the eye gently into the painting by adding not only a background behind his figures but an intermediate space, or middle ground.



Andrea Mantegna
***The Dead Christ or The Lamentation
over the Dead Christ*** c. 1501
oil on canvas
68 × 81 cm
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy

Florence, where Masaccio lived, was the main artistic centre of Italy during the fifteenth century. (Rome would become the centre of art during the High Renaissance period.) This was a reflection of its prosperity as an emerging merchant city, based on textiles and banking (leading to the growth of an affluent middle class). There was a new feeling of civic pride. Artists were commissioned by the Church and by wealthy patrons both to decorate private chapels and to paint portraits.

Andrea Mantegna was born in a village not far from Padua, near Venice. He was one of the few Renaissance artists to spend all his working life in northern Italy. He is particularly famous for his adoption of a viewpoint slightly below his subject, foreshortening anatomy and thereby adding drama to his narratives. At the early age of 17 he received his first commission — for a complex altarpiece for the church of Santa Sophia in Padua. By 1457 Mantegna's fame was such that the Lord of Mantua employed him as his court painter. Mantegna was responsible for many religious works as well as court paintings. Although this appointment gave him financial security, it also committed him to less interesting projects such as temporary decorations for town and court festivities.

By the age of 30, however, Mantegna had become a self-taught classical scholar, humanist and archaeologist, and was consulted on building projects. Apart from painting, his main preoccupation was the study and collecting of antique sculpture. It seems he was also influenced by the use of colour of the Venetian artist Giovanni Bellini, who became his brother-in-law when Mantegna married his sister Nicolosa. Mantegna died at the age of 75, having lived a full and creative artistic life that had made him the leading figure in the art of northern Italy for more than fifty years.

EARLY RENAISSANCE

In responding to the changes in beliefs and attitudes of the time, and in particular in their representation of religious stories as human dramas in the real world, the Early Renaissance artists continued to develop ways of making people seem natural and solid, adding tone and experimenting with perspective, using the idea of a vanishing point (meaning objects were depicted as smaller the more distant they were from the foreground) to show a realistic depth in their paintings. Early Renaissance artists included Masaccio, Mantegna, Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, Fra Angelico and Uccello.

STUDYING ART

Structural Frame

- 1 What device has Masaccio used to lead the viewer's eye from the left to the right of *The Tribute Money*?
- 2 How does the restricted colour range add to the mood of *The Dead Christ*?
- 3 Look carefully at the compositional decisions Mantegna has made — the tilt of Christ's head and the placement of the sheet, particularly where it covers the bed. How has he led viewers' gaze around the artwork, and where is the main focus?
- 4 *Subjective Frame*
What devices has Mantegna used to represent the mourners' sorrow?
- 5 *Cultural Frame*
How can you recognise *The Tribute Money* as an Italian painting of the fifteenth century and not an Australian painting of the present time?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Historical study

Cultural Frame — Conceptual Framework

How do the paintings of Masaccio and Mantegna reflect fifteenth-century society? Read the introductory notes on the Renaissance and consider such things as dress, people as individuals (humanism) and new attitudes in religion. Look back at the work of Giotto to help you identify the shift towards showing people in real situations.

ARTMAKING

- 1 *Postmodern Frame*
Borrow the image of the two people shaking hands on the right of Masaccio's painting *The Tribute Money*. Transform this into a meeting of two people in our present time in your neighbourhood or city.
- 2 *Structural Frame*
Use aerial and linear perspective to create a street scene with a sense of depth. Suggest a time of day and mood through your choice of colours and tone. Scan your drawing and use graphics software to add different colours and tones in order to create different moods.
- 3 Create a tonal drawing of a person in bed, adopting an unusual viewpoint. Place the person in a contemporary situation, such as in hospital or in your own bedroom. You might like to use the *Subjective Frame* and make it quite emotional.

Leonardo DA VINCI

[1452–1519, Italian]

FORM

oil painting, murals

FRAME

Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Leonardo constantly sought to understand his world — from dissecting dead bodies to understand the workings of bones and muscles, to investigating movement patterns in water, to his various attempts to emulate bird flight. His drawings and paintings are witness to his keen powers of observation and scientific approach to analysing and representing the reality of the world as he saw it.

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LEONARDO

Use the **Leonardo** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works and studies by this artist.



The Last Supper 1495–97
fresco (after restoration)
Santa Maria della Grazie, Milan, Italy/
The Bridgeman Art Library

CRITICAL STUDY

It is easy to identify the main figure in this highly ordered composition. Christ is singled out not only by the way the surrounding figures (the Disciples) lean away from him, but by the way his head is 'framed' by the central window, the arch above acting as a focusing device as well as symbolising a halo. The individuality of the faces and clothing adds to the humanity of the drama as the Disciples react with shock on learning that one of them will betray Jesus. Yet despite the anguish of the moment and the abandoned remains of the meal scattered across the table, Leonardo has retained a sense of harmony and spiritual calmness, in part through the work's strict perspective and symmetry and the way the eye is led to the peaceful landscape beyond the windows.

This painting shows the progression from Early Renaissance to High Renaissance art not only in its skill in creating realistic individual figures and spatial depth, but in the complexity of human emotions depicted.



The Virgin of the Rocks 1483–86
The Louvre, Paris
© 2010
Photo: Scala, Florence

In *Virgin of the Rocks* the Madonna is shown with the Christ child, St John and the angel Uriel. Mary (the Madonna), representing spiritual beauty and grace, is the paramount symbol of tenderness and love. The central figure of the Madonna stands out from the background. The unifying element in this painting is the use of *chiaroscuro* (light against shade). Using muted colours, Leonardo has created a spiritual relationship between nature and the figures. A mysterious mood has been evoked, similar to the allure that has helped maintain the popularity of his *Mona Lisa*. Both paintings have a feeling of deep space, a sense of the beauty and grandeur of the landscape, created by his *sfumato* technique of fading the edges and muting or dulling the colours of hills and rocks in the distance.

Leonardo began his artistic career as an assistant to the successful artist Verrocchio in the master's studio in Florence. It was common in this era for a work of art to be

CRITICAL STUDY

HISTORICAL STUDY

the product of several artists. Generally the master provided the initial sketches and instructions, and perhaps painted the important figures or particular details. It is said that Verrocchio was so impressed by Leonardo's work that he gave up painting, devoting himself instead to monumental sculpture. When Leonardo was 20 years old he was officially inscribed as a painter on the roll of the Guild of St Luke.

Leonardo epitomised the 'universal man' of the Renaissance, being a brilliant scientist, engineer and inventor as well as artist. He investigated the laws of physics, mechanics and botany. He studied anatomy and explored perspective and other methods of using colour and tone to create depth, atmosphere and mood in a painting. He was also an architect. Flight was one of his passionate interests: he produced designs for a parachute, a 'helicopter' and a hang-glider, and built many contraptions that simulated birds' flight. He was an extremely skilful draftsman. He could use light and shade, gently blending tones of colour to suggest the fine texture of flesh or the haze in a distant valley, or introduce strong tonal contrast to suggest mystery and spiritual power. His painting *Mona Lisa*, often called the world's most famous painting, has intrigued audiences for 500 years.

HIGH RENAISSANCE ART

The Renaissance brought a revival of interest in the classical works of Greece and Rome that inspired a new way of looking at the world. Thinkers turned away from the medieval preoccupation with saving souls and achieving redemption (the forgiveness of sins), and began to explore people's individuality and to educate them on their duties to society. This became a movement known as humanism. At the same time, artists celebrated the beauty of the human body, represented in real landscapes and deep space, thus creating more lifelike paintings. Leonardo was responsible for major experiments and developments in these efforts to render reality.

The main characteristics of the High Renaissance style can be summarised as: a sense of harmony and balance, calmness and serenity; depicting an ideal world without imperfections; an understanding of perspective and deep space; and an understanding of the proportions of the human figure.

STUDYING ART

- 1 What compositional devices has Leonardo da Vinci used to create a sense of peace and harmony despite the mystery and darkness of the setting in *Virgin of the Rocks*?
- 2 How has Leonardo created a sense of great distance behind the Madonna in *Virgin of the Rocks*?
- 3 What symbols or gestures has Leonardo used to tell the audience this is a religious painting?

ESSAY QUESTION

'Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael and Michelangelo were all High Renaissance artists who painted religious subjects, yet their figures are quite different.' Discuss with reference to two of these artists.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create a sense of mystery in a charcoal drawing of a cave similar to the one painted by Leonardo in *The Virgin of the Rocks*. You may leave out the figures, concentrating on the texture and dramatic use of light and dark. Sometimes it is interesting to add the main shadows with an ink wash, then let it dry before adding the detail in charcoal. A white or cream pastel could be used to add highlights.
Do a peer evaluation of these works to see how effective you were in conveying the mood (page xi).
- 2 Recreate *The Last Supper* by scanning in the artwork and introducing digital changes to make it more contemporary.
or
Create a collaged version of *The Last Supper*, retaining the same composition (arrangement) but using figures (you may draw these if you prefer) and background areas cut out from magazines. You could work on this collage in pairs. (Note: You will need to find your figures first to determine the scale (size) of your work.) Do a PMI evaluation (page xv) of your efforts in your Process Diary.

Raphael

(b. Raffaello Sanzio, 1483–1520, Italian)

FORM

oil painting

FRAME

Cultural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Raphael reflects his world, conveying to the viewer a sense of peace, calmness and harmony. His artworks were highly respected at the time both as creations of a master painter and as objects of beauty. The audience cannot help but respond to the realism of the figures (the art object).

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RAPHAEL

Use the **Raphael** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works and studies by this artist.



The Marriage of the Virgin 1504
oil on panel
170.1 × 118 cm
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan, Italy/
The Bridgeman Art Library

This painting depicts the marriage of the Virgin Mary, yet by the clothing and setting it could easily be interpreted as the wedding of a middle-class family in fifteenth-century Florence. A group of people gather in the city square in the foreground of the painting, while other groups casually chat in the middle ground or walk around the base of the round church in the background. The perspective

CRITICAL STUDY

lines provided by the paving draw the eye away from the straight line of the front group towards the church and the landscape in the distance. The mood created by the central, almost triangular composition and the great sense of depth is one of calmness and harmony. Rather than showing us an emotional religious event, Raphael has created a sense of elegance and reverence by painting perfect forms in a perfect setting (this we call *idealism*).

HISTORICAL STUDY

Raphael was born in the town of Urbino, in central Italy. In about 1504 he went to Florence, then in 1508 he moved to Rome, the centre of High Renaissance art. At the age of 25, he was asked by Pope Julius II to decorate the papal rooms in the Vatican. Raphael worked in one part of the Vatican, in the Signature Room, at the same time as Michelangelo was working in the Sistine Chapel in another part of the Vatican. *The School of Athens*, painted during this time in the Vatican, symbolises philosophy and the search for truth. Raphael has depicted groups of people (some sixty in total), including Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, in a large area of a classical building. Greek philosophy was a strong influence on Renaissance ideas. Raphael thus reflects his world, its religious beliefs as well as humanist values. The figures have been painted with an understanding of anatomy and a careful application of tone to show solidity.

Raphael's paintings told religious stories or referred to classical philosophy and Renaissance ideals such as virtue and wisdom. He sought to represent beauty and peaceful compassion in everything he created. This approach to his subjects, as well as his skilful execution, brought him widespread popularity during his lifetime. His paintings were renowned for their perfectly balanced compositions, graceful figures and exquisite detail.



Raphael was able to achieve a sense of deep space in his paintings through the innovative technique of linear perspective developed during the early Renaissance by such artists as Masaccio and Piero della Francesca. According to this technique, objects appear to be smaller when they become more distant. Raphael also employed aerial perspective to increase the sense of distance in his paintings, showing an awareness that edges are softer and colours less bright in the distance.

In Renaissance times a balanced life was the goal of every educated person, for the belief was that such a life brought harmony to one's soul. These ideals are reflected in Raphael's calm, well-balanced, almost symmetrical compositions. Raphael is also known for his tender, peaceful paintings of the Madonna, which reflect a sense of grace and beauty. He painted more than a hundred Madonna paintings. He was a popular, well-liked artist in his time, and as a result he became quite wealthy.

Raphael's work, with its emphasis on humanity and nature, relates strongly to the *Cultural Frame* as it reflects the ideas, beliefs and achievements of society of the time.

Self Portrait c. 1506

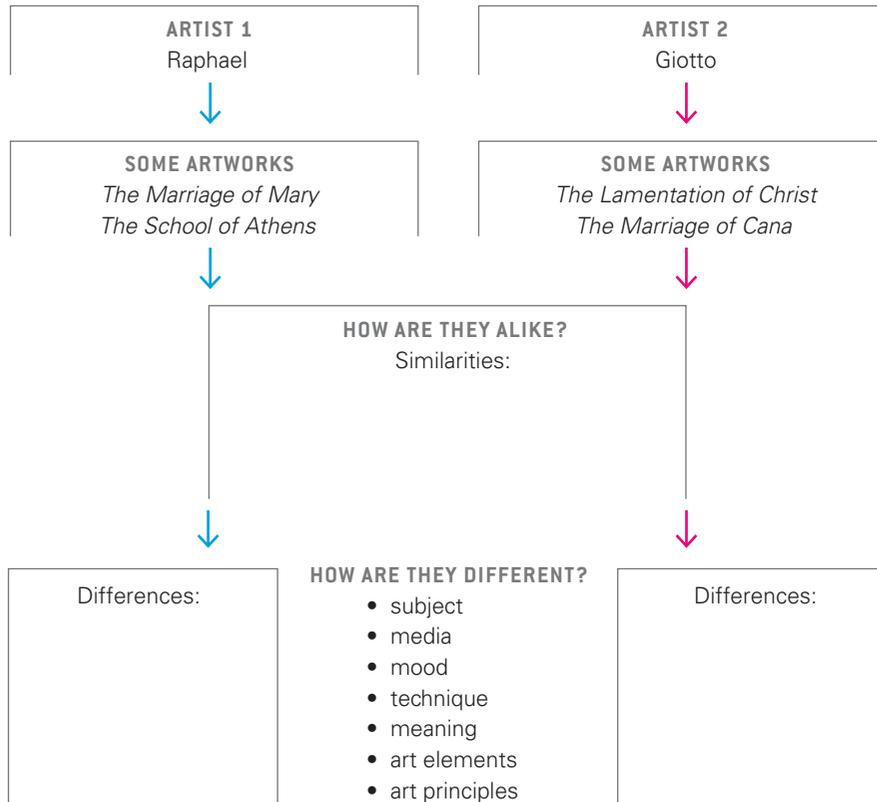
tempera on wood

47.5 × 33 cm

Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, Italy/The

Bridgeman Art Library

How has Raphael shown more depth in this painting than Giotto did in *The Lamentation of Christ*? You might wish to use a comparison chart, as shown below.

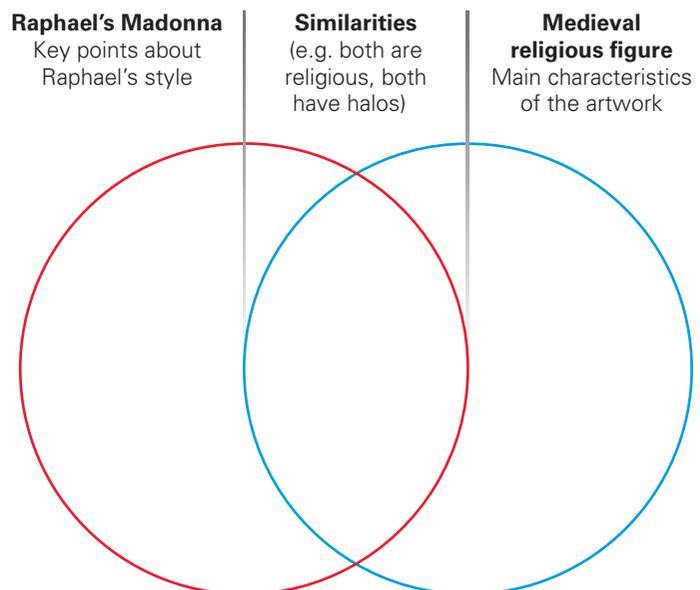


- 1 Subjective Frame — Cultural Frame**
Create an artwork that depicts a family event.
- 2 Postmodern Frame**
Copy the positions of the figures in *The Marriage of Mary*, change their clothes and put them in a contemporary setting. (They could be in front of your school hall, perhaps, or outside a building in the city.)
This activity should help you understand the Postmodern method of appropriation. *Appropriation* involves taking images from past artworks and putting them in a new context to alter their meaning.

ESSAY QUESTIONS

- Raphael is a typical High Renaissance artist. Analyse his paintings in terms of the Renaissance style, particularly how he achieved a sense of realism. The following summary points may assist you:
 - A feeling of harmony and balance
 - Calmness and serenity
 - An ideal world without imperfections
 - An understanding of perspective and the creation of deep space.

Note: You could work with a friend to create a PowerPoint presentation to share with your class.
- Write a short essay comparing a Madonna image by Raphael with a medieval religious figure — for example, a Catalan fresco or the work of a Siennese artist such as Duccio or Simone Martini. You could use a Venn diagram to help you plan your essay, as shown at right.



FORMS

sculpture, fresco

FRAME

Subjective

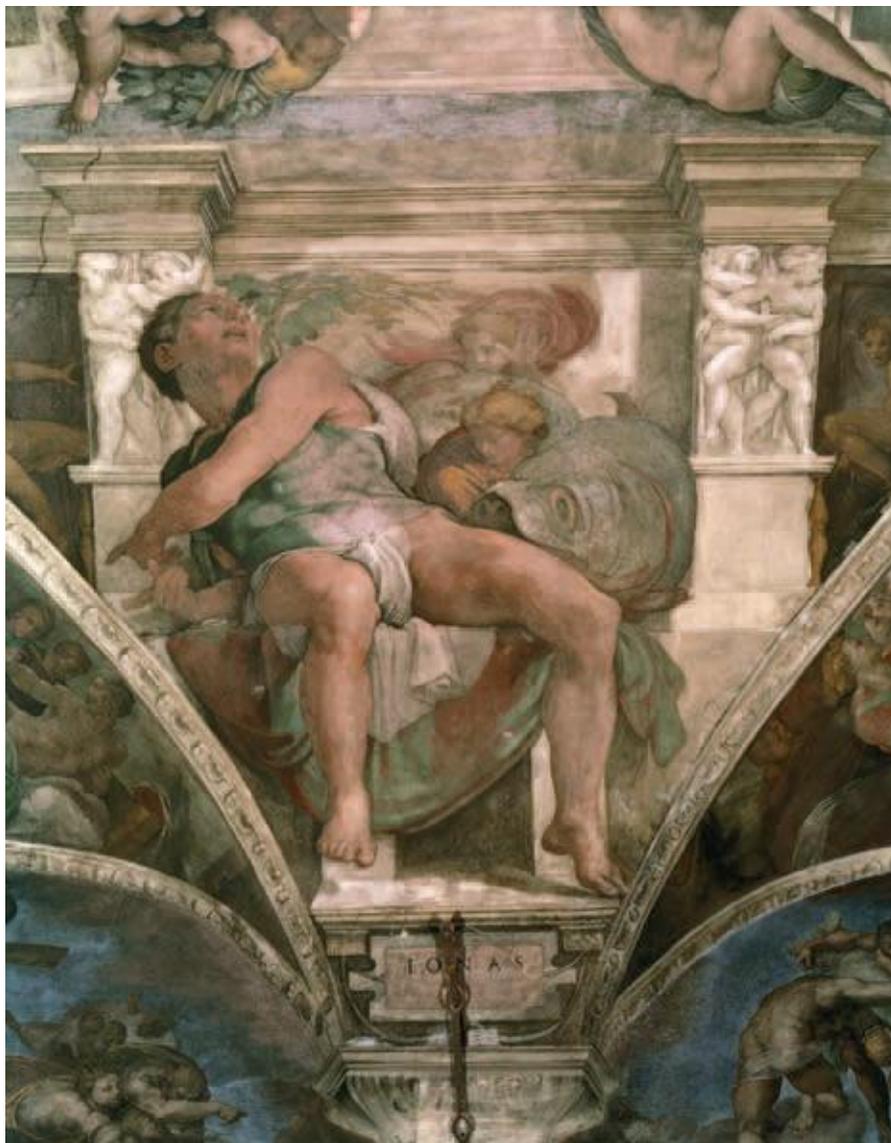
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Michelangelo's passionate nature, strong will and anguish were expressed in his powerful, skilful sculptures and paintings. They reflect his strong religious feelings and are timeless expressions of human nature and life's struggles.

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MICHELANGELO

Use the **Michelangelo** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and works of Michelangelo.



The Prophet Jonah 1511–12

fresco

400 × 380 cm

Vatican, Sistine Chapel

© 1990, Photo Scala, Florence

CRITICAL STUDY

Although the vaulted area above the altar where this figure is painted actually curves forward, through his skills in drawing and perspective, Michelangelo makes it appear straight. Jonah, the prophet of the Resurrection, is shown here with a huge fish symbolising the whale beside him. There is tension and a feeling of anticipation in this painting, the figure leaning back and twisted to the side, his mouth open as if about to speak. We relate to this person as an individual, wondering what he is thinking and what his next move will be. The figure is muscular and has a sense of weight and solidity. The viewpoint from slightly below emphasises his importance. Michelangelo displays his skill in drawing and painting figures in unusual positions through his understanding of anatomy and the laws of foreshortening. Note the way he adds strength to the figure by varying the outline, darkening and emphasising the points of tension. Note, too, his skill in using tone to create the folds in the drapery that falls over the edge of the seat.

Michelangelo has achieved extraordinary realism, and through the work's emotional intensity and sense of the moment we gain an insight into the artist's own interpretation of this religious story.

Rebellious Slave 1513–16

The Louvre, Paris

© 2010

Photo: Scala, Florence

Michelangelo creates powerful statements in stone. These works express feelings of tension and anguish. They are idealised images of the human body based on a deep knowledge of proportion and the anatomical workings of the body, but Michelangelo twists (and emphasises) certain parts of the anatomy in order to express deep human emotions. With this pair of statues we become aware of some of the more painful issues in life — doubts, frustrations and torments of the mind and body.

CRITICAL STUDY

The Bound Slave catches the prisoner in a moment of defiant, stubborn but probably useless struggle. *The Dying Slave* shows the downward pull of exhaustion and expresses an attitude of defeat. The torso is twisted with fatigue. The right hand appears too heavy to push back the bindings restraining him. His right hip and leg must bear his weight.

Michelangelo used the body, not only the face, as the medium through which he could express emotions.

Michelangelo Buonarroti was an outstanding painter, draftsman and sculptor of the sixteenth-century High Renaissance period. His other talents included architecture, poetry, engineering and music, although sculpture was his greatest passion. He was a deeply religious man who felt that observing and creating beautiful things brought him closer to heaven.

HISTORICAL STUDY

This great Florentine's long and productive life had a decisive influence on the development of the High Renaissance. Michelangelo developed a new anatomical drawing method that served as an important model for artists of the time. He created the ideal human figure, heroic and full of power. As a result of his understanding of human anatomy and musculature, his figures express a unique inner life, energy and passion. If we compare Michelangelo's figures to Raphael's (page 163), we can see that Raphael's are not nearly as physically powerful. They are not idealised solitary heroes; rather, they tend to communicate with one another, their actions are more harmonious and fluid, and they seem to exist within a defined space.

Classical Greek nude statues influenced Renaissance artists, including Michelangelo. He even copied some of the stances and positions of Greek sculptures (e.g. David) in order to reveal the beauty and strength of the human form. Michelangelo, however, created sculptures that expressed intellectual and spiritual as well as emotional ideas. His subjects ranged from the proud, confident, heroic and determined figure of David, the youth responsible for slaying the giant Goliath as told in the Bible, to the perfect, serene beauty and sadness of the Pietà, which represented Mary with the dead Jesus across her lap.



Dying Slave 1513–16

The Louvre, Paris

© 2010

Photo: Scala, Florence

His work thus expresses a wide range of emotional states. In the large, imposing figure of the angry Moses, Michelangelo conveys the sense of anticipation and contained strength of the figure, the tense, tightened muscles ready for release.

Michelangelo had a great respect for the medium of stone. He went to the quarries of Carrara, where the marble was cut from the cliffs, in order to select the material he would work with. He looked for pieces that suggested to him a trapped figure within. Then he used the methods of a carver, chipping and scraping away areas from the massive blocks of marble.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Analyse how Michelangelo uses tone, line and viewpoint to add strength to his painted figures.
- 2 Explain how Michelangelo worked from the *Subjective Frame*.
- 3 What is your personal opinion of *The Bound Slave* and *The Dying Slave*? Which one do you like best and why?
- 4 Can you imagine a situation that these figures could represent in our own time?
- 5 What sculpting method did Michelangelo use (*Structural Frame* — artist's practice)?
- 6 What earlier period of art influenced Renaissance artists?

ESSAY QUESTION

Compare Michelangelo's seated figure *The Prophet Jonah* with Matisse's interpretation of a seated figure in *Lady in Blue*. Apart from the obvious difference in sex, what do you think are the different approaches or *intentions* of the artists? Consider the different cultures and times, as well as the art elements (line, shape, tone, colour, form, movement) and principles (balance, unity, harmony, distortion, pattern, abstraction).

To help you draft your essay, fill out the following comparison matrix diagram.

	Artist 1	Artist 2
1 Intention of artist		
2 Elements (e.g. colour, tone)		
3 Principles (e.g. unity, balance)		

FURTHER RESEARCH

What was the purpose of Michelangelo's paintings in the Sistine Chapel? You might want to look up images of the whole ceiling and of *The Last Judgement* before answering.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Michelangelo created figures of power, energy and strength who represented important individuals in religious stories. Who are the heroes of your world or belief system? Create an artwork to express the important qualities of someone you admire. You might like to consider using the method of collage or creating a digital work. After completion, write up an evaluation of your work in your Process Diary. To begin this project, create a mind map (page xiv) in your Process Diary, putting your hero's name in the middle, and then add their physical characteristics, dress, symbols, related objects and deeds.
- 2 Using wire, create a sculpture to express movement or tension.

MODERNISM

Although 'modern' is often used loosely in relation to things of the present day or recent times, in art history it refers to the historical period from roughly the 1860s to the 1960s and 1970s. Modern art is about rejecting the old, embracing the new. Although there was no single distinct style during this period, there was an affinity (closeness or compatibility) in philosophy or approach, which is generally identified as 'Modernism' or Modern art. It was marked by a striving to develop a new style or way of creating art, referred to as 'avant-garde', and rejection of the traditional role of art to create the illusion of reality. Images became symbols of a new way of thinking about the world. The art object was respected in its own right: it was 'art for art's sake', and the artist was seen as radical and individualistic.

A major contributing factor to Modernist art was the invention of the camera, which freed the artist from the need to represent 'reality' strictly as it was seen. Representational accuracy in depicting the external world, the tradition of illusionism developed since the Renaissance, became less important.

With changes in society brought about by the Industrial Revolution came changes in art patronage. The Church and the aristocratic elite did not support and finance artmaking to the degree they had traditionally. No longer confined to religious and historical subjects, artists were freed to choose their subjects, and independent art dealers started to sell their work to a wider public. Twentieth-century artists constantly sought new techniques and new means of expression, responding freely to their own emotional states of being. These experiments eventually led to complete abstraction in art.

Modernism is known for its individualism as well as its artistic theories around expressing new ideas and using untried techniques. Starting with the Impressionists, Modern art developed a multiplicity of styles, as the diagram on the following page illustrates.

Impressionism was the first of the Modern art movements. It was named after Monet's depiction of the effect of light in his painting *Impression: Sunrise*. Impressionist artists included Monet, Manet, Renoir, Sisley, Pissarro, Degas and Berthe Morisot. This group of French artists rejected the old methods and the smooth finish expected, instead employing daring sketchy brushwork to show the changing effects of light and atmosphere on everyday scenes and landscapes. Their focus on landscapes or on casual arrangements of figures was an attempt to 'reflect modern life'. Artists left the confines of their studios to paint directly and spontaneously with short brushstrokes of pure colour, focusing their interest on

LIST OF ARTISTS

Painting

- Auguste Renoir p. 171
- Paul Gauguin p. 174
- Vincent van Gogh p. 176
- Paul Cézanne p. 179
- Henri Matisse p. 182
- Georges Braque p. 185
- Ernst Ludwig Kirchner p. 188
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Sculpture

- Auguste Rodin p. 218
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Georges Braque
Houses at L'Estaque 1908
 oil on canvas
 72.4 × 58.4 cm
 Kunstmuseum, Berne
 Photo: The Gallery Collection/Corbis
 Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

the fleeting light effects and colours of nature. Painting in the open air (*en plein air*) was central to Impressionism.

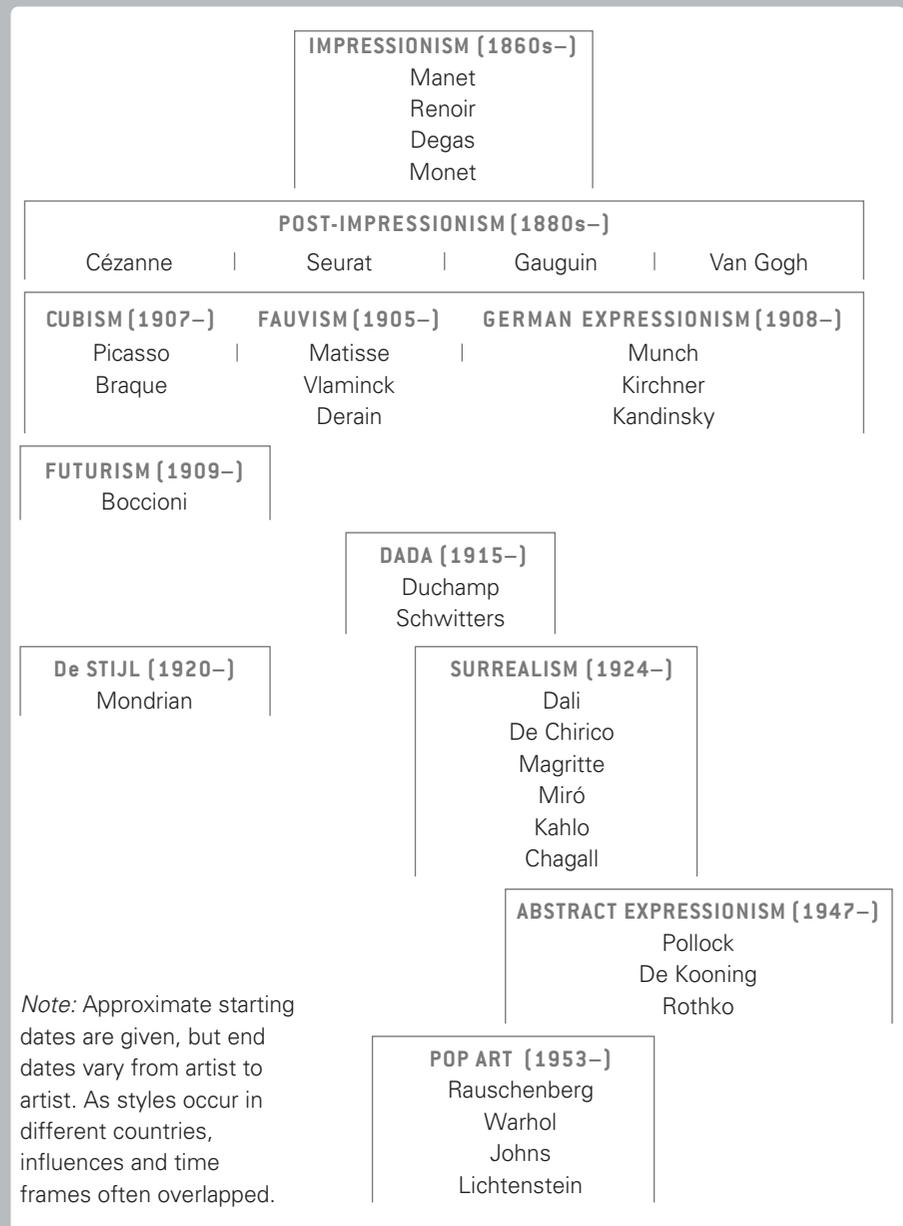
With the Post-Impressionists there came a division in approach, with Gauguin and Van Gogh using the emotive power of colour to represent personal experiences (*Subjective Frame*), while Cézanne and Seurat worked more from the mind than the emotions, creating a visual language, applying theories of colour and an ordered, almost mathematical approach to composition and creating form (*Structural Frame*).

eBook plus

**INTERACTIVITY:
VOCABULARY BUILDER**

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2193



Auguste RENOIR

[1841–1926, French]

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Cultural, Structural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Renoir depicts the relaxed Parisian lifestyle of his world.

eBookplus RENOIR

Use the **Renoir** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore the media, an interactive timeline and a biography of this artist.

Renoir's work has vigour and strength as he paints directly, creating an intensely rich visual experience. Typical of the Impressionists, Renoir captured the play of light on his surfaces, having a particular interest in the reflections in water (we think of Monet's waterlilies). Unlike the other Impressionists, however, Renoir rarely painted a landscape without including figures, although here they are not the main focus of the painting. The eye is skilfully led back by the angles of the boats to the bridge and beyond, following the light patches on the water. There is a freshness and sense of immediacy, the patches of thickly loaded brushstrokes creating a vibrant, textural surface. The interest in showing atmosphere, reflecting the time of day and weather conditions, is also evident from his choice of colours, the tonal contrasts suggesting strong sunlight. The overall mood is of a relaxed social gathering at which the people are enjoying each other's company in a natural setting.

CRITICAL STUDY

La Grenouillère 1869

oil on canvas

66.5 × 81 cm

National Museum, Stockholm, Sweden/
The Bridgeman Art Library





The Luncheon of the Boating Party

1880–81

oil on canvas

129.5 × 172.5 cm

The Phillips Collection

Washington DC, USA

CRITICAL STUDY

The atmosphere in *The Luncheon of the Boating Party* is of casual merriment as smiling young men and women flirt and relax. The impression is of a lazy, sunny Sunday afternoon. Note the way the girl in the sun bonnet leans on the balcony as she chats to the man in the centre. Warm, dappled sunlight breaks through from the top left. The light seems to be vibrating. The touches of bright vermillion red add unity to the work, leading the viewer's eye around the painting. A variety of brushstrokes have been used, to show the softness of flesh, the translucency of glass, the rich texture of ruffled lace, dog fur and the bushes beyond the balcony. Renoir has used the balcony to divide the picture space into foreground and background. The most intense colours have been used to depict the foreground figures; the colours have been diluted in the distance. For this painting, Renoir's friends posed for him on the terrace of the Restaurant Fournaise at the Isle of Chatou on the River Seine. Renoir made studies and sketches on the spot. The young girl, Aline, in the fashionable hat holding the Pekinese was to become Renoir's wife.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Renoir began his artistic life as a teenage apprentice porcelain decorator. In the ceramics workshop he learned how to use pure colour to achieve his effects. From this experience he learned that the white porcelain base accentuated the clarity and brilliance of the colours. Renoir later applied this knowledge by rejecting the traditional dark grounds (undercoat on canvas) in favour of a white or very pale ground. On these he applied light, feathery brushstrokes of vermillion, cobalt blue, emerald green, Naples yellow and lead white. Renoir made use of the visual effect of warm pinks and golds to appear to advance while the cool

blue shadows recede. At times he thinned his paint and used a fine brush, even allowing patches of the white canvas to shine through; in other areas he applied thick paint boldly. To build purity of colour, Renoir mixed his paints on the canvas rather than on the palette, applying them wet-on-wet. He thus added one colour next to or into another before the first was dry.

Although he worked by no strict rules, he evidently had an intuitive understanding of how to achieve a vibrancy of colour by using ‘complementaries’ next to each other (red with green, blue with orange). In this way he was able to intensify their impact on the viewer.

During the years that Renoir and Monet worked together at Argenteuil, they often painted the same subjects. The Impressionists generally strove to respond to contemporary experience rather than historical events or the imagination. Rather than pure landscapes, Renoir’s main interest was in portraits and figures within the landscape. The effects of light and shade on foliage are typically Impressionist. Although the compositions appear spontaneous, with casual groupings of figures, some with their backs to us, and figures cut off at the edges of the canvas, Renoir actually planned his images, often working from preliminary studies to achieve the impression of the captured moment.

During the late 1860s, Monet and Renoir worked very closely together, but Renoir’s works are distinguished by a softer, more delicate approach than Monet’s. Renoir’s emphasis was on painting quickly to achieve a direct expression of the light and colour of the subject in front of him, often with daring use of colour. He generally used bright blue rather than black for his shadows. The traditional emphasis on a perfect finish of smooth brushstrokes was abandoned. It was said that Renoir was incapable of creating an ugly or sad painting, a statement with which the artist apparently agreed.

Renoir exhibited at the first three Impressionist exhibitions and at the seventh. Otherwise he showed his work at private solo exhibitions and at the Paris Salon.

STUDYING ART

1 *Cultural and Subjective Frames*

Note where each figure is looking in *The Luncheon of the Boating Party*. Is there eye contact between some of the figures? Write a brief narrative or develop a storyboard (page xvii) about three of the characters, imagining what they are thinking or saying.

Structural Frame

- 2 Look carefully at the table. How does the arrangement of objects add to the meaning or mood of the painting?
- 3 In what way does *The Luncheon of the Boating Party* show characteristics of the Impressionist style? You might like to do a single bubble map (page xvii) of the Impressionist style first.
- 4 How does Renoir achieve the effect of sunlight filtered through foliage? Look at the way he has painted the white T-shirts and tablecloth.
- 5 How could you use *The Luncheon of the Boating Party* to make a community values advertisement suitable for television or a newspaper (for example on skin cancer or alcohol abuse)?

Conceptual Framework

- 6 What do we learn from this painting about middle-class society in France at this time?
- 7 With the invention of the camera, and changes in society as well as the way art was exhibited, how do you think the role of the artist began to change in the Modernist era?

ESSAY QUESTION

Renoir paints with a sense of freedom and joy, creating a balance of focus between the figure and nature. Explain Renoir’s approach to painting figures in a landscape and compare it with the approach of one other artist. You might like to consider Munch, Kirchner or Louise Hearman. (*Note:* Research other works by Renoir and include at least two artworks in your essay. Suggestions: *Le Moulin de la Galette* 1876, *In the Luxembourg Garden* 1883, *The Umbrellas* 1882, *The Swing* 1876.)

ARTMAKING

Create an artwork, perhaps through scanning photographs and manipulating them digitally, to suggest a mood of happiness among a group of people — perhaps at a sporting event, in an outdoor restaurant, bicycling in the park or on a picnic. Don’t forget to record your thoughts and sketches of ideas for compositions in your Process Diary.

Paul GAUGUIN

[1848–1903, French]

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Subjective in the emotional use of colour; *Structural* in the individual visual language he developed

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Gauguin painted his ideal world, a relaxed, primitive culture. His art concentrated on the expressive possibilities of colour and a flattening of space. It was a style that greatly influenced Modernist artists.

VOCABULARY

foreground area at the front of the image, closest to the viewer
representational art lifelike, realistic art
serene calm, peaceful

eBook plus

GAUGUIN: WORKS

Use the **Gauguin** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a gallery of works by this artist.



The White Horse 1898

oil on canvas

140 × 91.5 cm

Collection: Musée d'Orsay, Paris

CRITICAL STUDY

There is a sense of harmony between the animals, men and nature in this painting. The mood is tranquil, timeless, **serene**. Decorative, patterned areas of gloriously rich colour are the main focus of the work. Note the strong orange ripples in the water. The colour of the horse in the top left corner is a warm orange-red against the lime green. The white horse symbolises purity and peace.

The plants in the bottom right corner are shown in close-up detail; the horses towards the top are reduced in scale. These are two ways of suggesting depth in a painting, yet the overall impression here is of a flattened space. This is mainly because the colours in what should be the background are as bright as those in the **foreground** and therefore seem to ‘jump forward’. The branches of the tree unite the work, leading the eye across the painting.

Gauguin was a stockbroker, married with four children, who had an interest in art and collected works by the Impressionists. He began painting when he was 35. In 1875 he began working with Pissarro, and in 1880 he exhibited in the Fifth Impressionist Exhibition. In 1883 the Paris Stock Exchange crashed. Gauguin lost his job. His marriage failed and he made the decision to paint full time.

Gauguin began painting as an Impressionist but increasingly abandoned **representational art** to pursue expressiveness through colour alone. In his paintings showing village life in Brittany, he began to simplify his shapes, although his colours and paint application were still similar to those of the Impressionists.

Gauguin visited the Caribbean island of Martinique in 1887 and discovered the brilliant colouring and sensual delights of a tropical landscape. He also experienced the charm of a primitive community living a natural and unhurried life. In 1886 Gauguin was influenced by the colour experiments of Seurat and Signac, and in 1888 he met and spent a short period with Van Gogh in Arles. Gauguin was beginning to break with Impressionism, and by 1891 he was deliberately ‘flattening’ objects in his paintings, creating strong visual effects with colour.

From 1891 Gauguin lived and worked in Tahiti and elsewhere in the South Pacific. He sought art as an emotional release. Tropical island landscapes and their inhabitants became the subjects and inspiration for his colourful, simplified shapes and areas of pattern.

During his second Tahitian period (1895–1901), Gauguin painted several landscapes with animals, including horses (*The White Horse*), dogs, pigs, cows and goats. People seem to play a minor part in these paintings, blending in with nature. Some paintings were studies for his *Nativity Scene* series. However, Gauguin’s major output was of Tahitian women in casual, relaxed poses.

Gauguin is described as a Post-Impressionist. He brightened his colours, simplified forms and treated shadows as shapes, adding pattern as a decorative element. These aspects of his art were a great influence on Modern artists, in particular the Fauvists (page 184). His use of colour as a means of expression also influenced the Expressionist painters. Gauguin introduced an interest in exotic, primitive and non-European cultures as inspiration for Western art.

HISTORICAL STUDY

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Subjective Frame

- 1 Imagine yourself sitting under the tree in *The White Horse*. How would you feel? Have you ever been in a similar place? Write a short story inspired by this scene.
- 2 Imagine *The White Horse* has just been bought for your regional or state art gallery. You are the gallery’s curator. Write a short piece of critical art writing (half a page) to be published in the art gallery magazine to promote and justify the purchase of the painting. Include these words in your review: *decorative, colour, simplified*.
- 3 **Structural Frame**
What are the main art elements of concern to Gauguin in this work? (Art elements may include line, direction, shape, size, tone, texture and colour.) Explain your choice.

Historical study

- 4 In what style did Gauguin first paint?
- 5 To what period of art did Gauguin (with Van Gogh, Cézanne and Seurat) belong?
- 6 What influence did Gauguin’s move to Tahiti have on his painting?
- 7 What Modern art styles did Gauguin influence and why?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Critical study

‘Gauguin was a unique artist who developed his own style of representing his experiences.’ Write a short essay supporting this statement by explaining Gauguin’s methods and approaches, referring to at least two of his paintings.

ARTMAKING

Create an artwork in which animals blend into a landscape. You may work in paint, drawing or multimedia, including collage.

Vincent VAN GOGH

[1853–1890, Dutch]

FORM

painting

FRAME

Subjective — Van Gogh is the forerunner of the *Subjective Frame* as a point of view in Modernism. His expression of intense emotions influenced the Expressionists, Fauves, Abstract Expressionists and a wide range of contemporary artists.

VOCABULARY

monochromatic using tones of only one basic colour
predominated stood out, appeared more obvious
spontaneity concerned with acting impulsively based on emotion rather than careful thought or planning
vibrancy liveliness, energy and bold colour

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is a close relationship between Van Gogh and his artworks, which are very personal representations of his immediate world. The mood created involves the audience on an intimate level.

eBook plus

VAN GOGH GALLERY

Use the **Van Gogh gallery** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a gallery of works by this artist.

POST-IMPRESSIONISM

A mainly French art movement of the late nineteenth century. Inspired by Impressionism (with its interest in the fleeting effects of light on objects and landscapes), the Post-Impressionists went on to create their own individual styles and were very influential on later Modernist artists. The main representatives were Van Gogh, Cézanne, Seurat and Gauguin. Many art historians also include Toulouse-Lautrec.



Olive Trees 1889

oil on canvas

51 × 65.2 cm

Purchased in 1934 by the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

CRITICAL STUDY

The olive trees seem to have a life of their own, a **vibrancy**, as their twisted forms reach towards the sunlight. There is a freshness of colour and sense of **spontaneity**, as though Van Gogh was painting quickly with a feeling of joy and awe at the wonderful textures and patterns of light he saw. The curving line of the hill adds

movement and immediacy. He has applied the paint in layers of thick, curving lines. The writhing olive trees could also symbolise his growing inner torment and emotional instability, which finally led to his suicide.



Starry Night is one of his most famous 'night paintings', which include *Terrace of a Café at Night* 1888 and *Night Café* 1888. The choice of lighting and time of day add to the drama of the scene. Leaving the hectic Parisian life and moving to the south of France during 1888 led to a prolific period during which he produced more than 200 paintings in just 15 months. But his emotional stability deteriorated and in May 1889 he voluntarily entered the mental asylum at Saint-Rémy. During his one-year stay he painted *Starry Night*, an expressive work of spiritual intensity. The sky seems to come alive with its swirling orbs of light, while the cypress tree leads the eye towards heaven, the religious significance of the scene symbolised by the church spire in the valley. It was a time of strong self-reflection and emotional insecurity for Van Gogh, as is indicated by his approach to the landscape in this work. Cyprus trees, traditionally planted near or in graveyards in Europe, are a symbol of eternal life. Hills undulate with rhythmic lines, while the village (and thus the human presence) is overwhelmed by the surging cosmic forces of the sky. This artwork reflects Van Gogh's mystic vision and passionate spirit.

Starry Night is painted with the frenetic brushstrokes of his later style; the rapid brushstrokes of thickly applied paint and intense colour are also evident in his *Wheatfields with Crows* 1890. *Starry Night* is a pivotal work as it contains the two elements that become icons or symbols for emotion and for the paintings of Van Gogh in general — the cypress tree and the swirling sky.

CRITICAL STUDY

***Starry Night* 1889**
oil on canvas,
73.7 × 92.1 cm
Acquired through the
Lillie P. Bliss Bequest
Museum of Modern Art, New York

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Van Gogh's first drawings and paintings were of fields and labourers in his native Holland. He was 27 when he took up drawing seriously. In 1886 he moved to France, where he met the Impressionists, and later Gauguin.

Van Gogh was inspired by the Impressionists rather than being an Impressionist painter. The Impressionists' attitude to colour had a great effect on him during his early Paris years. It freed his style from the constrictions of the heavy, **monochromatic** colour scheme with which he had previously worked.

After his move to Arles in the south of France, with its brilliant sunshine, his works became luminous, full of movement and vitality. He developed an art of emotional intensity, painting what he felt rather than merely what he saw. With heavily laden brushstrokes he filled his canvases with insistent, hectic rhythms.

Van Gogh was a deeply religious man who saw nature as the handiwork of God. During his bouts of depression his paintings were rather morbid pictures of tormented skies and cypress trees blowing in a strong wind. These paintings have a sinister mood: the universe and nature painted as if their balance is disturbed, the stars and moon enlarged, buildings distorted, the skies alive with swirling brushstrokes, dark and foreboding. In happier moods his landscapes were cheerful paintings in which yellow **predominated**, with individual, thick, swirling brushstrokes expressing his unique way of seeing and representing the different textures in nature.

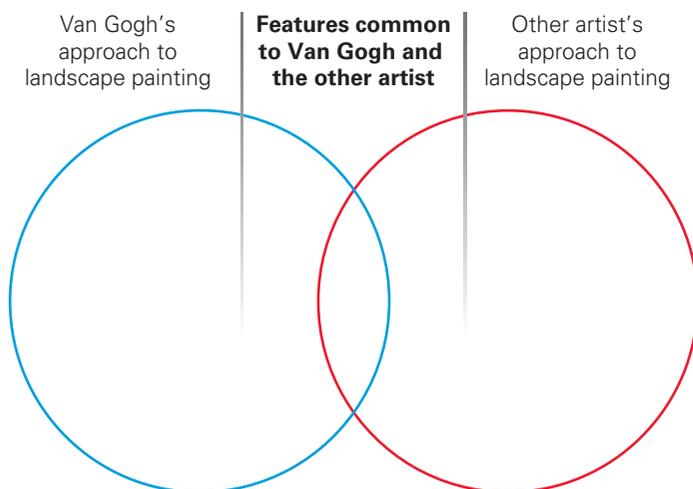
During his short life Van Gogh sold only one of his paintings commercially, and yet he produced some of the most exciting art of his time and was influential to generations of painters and sculptors.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Look up another landscape by Van Gogh on the internet or in a book from your school library. Write your own response to the painting. (Avoid using value words such as 'good' and 'nice' when writing your opinions of artworks.) Develop your written expression and widen your vocabulary by using at least one of the following words to describe his style (look up these words in the dictionary if you are unsure of their meaning): *swirling, heaving, billowing, flaring, emotive, tormented, dramatic, exciting, expressive, intense, spontaneous*.
- 2 Write a sentence evaluating Van Gogh's use of each of the following art elements: line, texture, colour, movement.
- 3 How are his landscapes influenced by the Impressionists Monet, Pissarro and Renoir (page 171), and how are they distinctly his own style?

COMPARISON ESSAY QUESTION

Compare Van Gogh's approach to painting landscape with the landscape of another artist of your choice. Consider the cultural context and purpose. You might plan your essay by using a two-column table or a Venn diagram, as shown below.



ESSAY QUESTION

Through Van Gogh's paintings we gain insights into his emotions. Analyse at least two of his paintings to show his varying moods. You might look also at his self-portraits.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Paint a landscape from your own observation using thick, bold application of paint similar to a Van Gogh. Develop possible ideas for compositions in your Process Diary first and write an evaluation on completion to assess your success in using the art elements and principles.
- 2 Re-create *Olive Trees* as an ink drawing, varying the thickness of the lines and directions in the way Van Gogh does with his brushstrokes, or create your own landscape in his style.

Paul CÉZANNE

(1839–1906, French)

FORM

painting

FRAME

Structural — He is more concerned with the method of painting than the subject or the mood created.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The artwork as an object and the technique used to create it are more important than what is being represented.

VOCABULARY

abstraction of art that is non-representational and achieves its effects through colour, line and form

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CÉZANNE

Use the **Cézanne** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works by this artist.



Cézanne's pieces of fruit are solid in form, the sense of weight accentuated by the thicker outline at the base of each piece, and the shadow where they reach the plate or tablecloth. He employs carefully placed brushstrokes to define form. The folds of the tablecloth create a rhythm in the painting, which helps to hold the fruit together. The sharp edge of the table acts as a balance to the handles of the pots, evidence of the way he carefully orchestrated the space of the canvas. Despite the choppy nature of the brushstrokes there is a feeling of calm and timelessness in this work.

In the composition of this painting, Cézanne has used colour to bring out the structure or volume of his objects: cool colours (blues and mauves) are used in the shadows and warm colours (pale lemon, orange) are used for highlights. There is little sense of depth.

CRITICAL STUDY

Still Life of Peaches and Pears 1888

oil on canvas

61 × 90 cm

Pushkin Museum, Moscow

The Bridgeman Art Library



Bords de la Marne c. 1888

oil on canvas

65.0 × 81.3 cm

Collection: Art Gallery of New South Wales

Purchased 2008 with funds provided by the Art Gallery of New South Wales Foundation, the Art Gallery Society of New South Wales, and donors to the Masterpiece Fund in joint celebration of the Foundation's 25th anniversary and Edmund Capon AM OBE's 30th anniversary as Director of the Gallery Accn no. 320.2008

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CRITICAL STUDY

Rather than capturing a fleeting impression of a landscape, Cézanne sought its underlying structure. He looked beyond the apparent reality of nature, simplifying it and organising it in his own way, flattening the space. Cézanne was tireless in interpreting the landscape, particularly in the Mediterranean region of Provence, where Mont Saint-Victoire became his favourite viewpoint. This landscape, however, was painted not far from the eastern outskirts of Paris. He emphasised structure through use of warm and cool combinations, gently modulating the colours and adding dark outlines to the main shapes. Colour — in this case vibrant greens, grey-blues, yellow ochre and touches of brick red — has been used in a patchwork way around the painting. In contrast to the expressive style of Van Gogh, Cézanne used an analytical approach.

‘It speaks nothing but Cézanne in terms of composition, texture and brushstrokes,’ Edmund Capon says of *Bords de la Marne*. ‘There are endless moments of intrigue — the reflections in the water, the way the village wall seems to curve around and out of sight, the solidity and concentration of the buildings, those greens . . .’

Look — AGNSW Magazine, 2009, p. 31

HISTORICAL STUDY

Cézanne began practice as an Impressionist, but he became disillusioned with the way light seemed to dissolve the forms. He wanted to create an art that had a feeling of permanence and a sense of structure. He developed his own individual style, although he did adopt the Impressionists' love of pure, unmixed colour and short, thick brushstrokes. He added a sense of solidity to his objects

through the careful placement of colours rather than the use of tone (the adding of black or brown to colours) favoured by earlier artists. He was revolutionary in eliminating the strong contrasts of light against dark, instead building up his composition with patches of vibrant colour.

Cézanne worked with the principle that cool colours recede whereas warm colours come forward in a painting. As his style developed, his brushstrokes became more block-like. He added defining lines.

The Post-Impressionists began working in the Impressionist style then went their individual ways, each creating a unique style. Each artist was a great influence on future artists. Van Gogh is also identified as a Post-Impressionist.

With his use of coloured patches in a shallow space, Cézanne led the way with a new approach to depicting reality, his influence seen particularly in the work of the Cubists. Art was heading towards **abstraction**.

Artist's statements

'The artist makes things concrete and gives them individuality.'

'For the artist, to see is to conceive and to conceive is to compose.'

'For the artist does not note his emotions as a bird modulates his sounds: he composes.'

'Art is a religion. It is the elevation of thought.'

'An intellect with a powerful ability to organize represents the most precious collaboration which a sensibility can have in its efforts to realize a work of art.'

'The technique of art comprises a language and a logic.'

'Contrasts and relations of tone — there lies the whole secret of drawing and relief.'

'Painting, like any art, comprises a technique, a workmanlike handling of material.'

Quoted from Richard Kendall (ed.), *Cézanne by himself*, Time Warner, 1988, p. 201

STUDYING ART

Critical study

1 *Structural Frame*

What was new about Cézanne's method of painting?

Historical study

2 How does Cézanne's work differ from that of the Impressionists?

3 How was the work of Cézanne a great influence on future Modern artists?

SHORT ESSAY QUESTION

Refer to some of the artist's statements and his artworks to argue that Cézanne approached art from the *Structural Frame*.

ARTMAKING

Create your own still life, divide it up into three areas and paint each in a different Modern artist's style, one being Cézanne's.

Henri MATISSE

[1869–1954, French]

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Subjective and Structural in his emotive use of colour as the main element

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The art object is important to the artworld as it indicates a new approach, from reproducing the illusion of reality to highlighting the importance of the painted surface. The paintings are the artist's individual approach to his world, focusing on bold, often unrealistic colour.

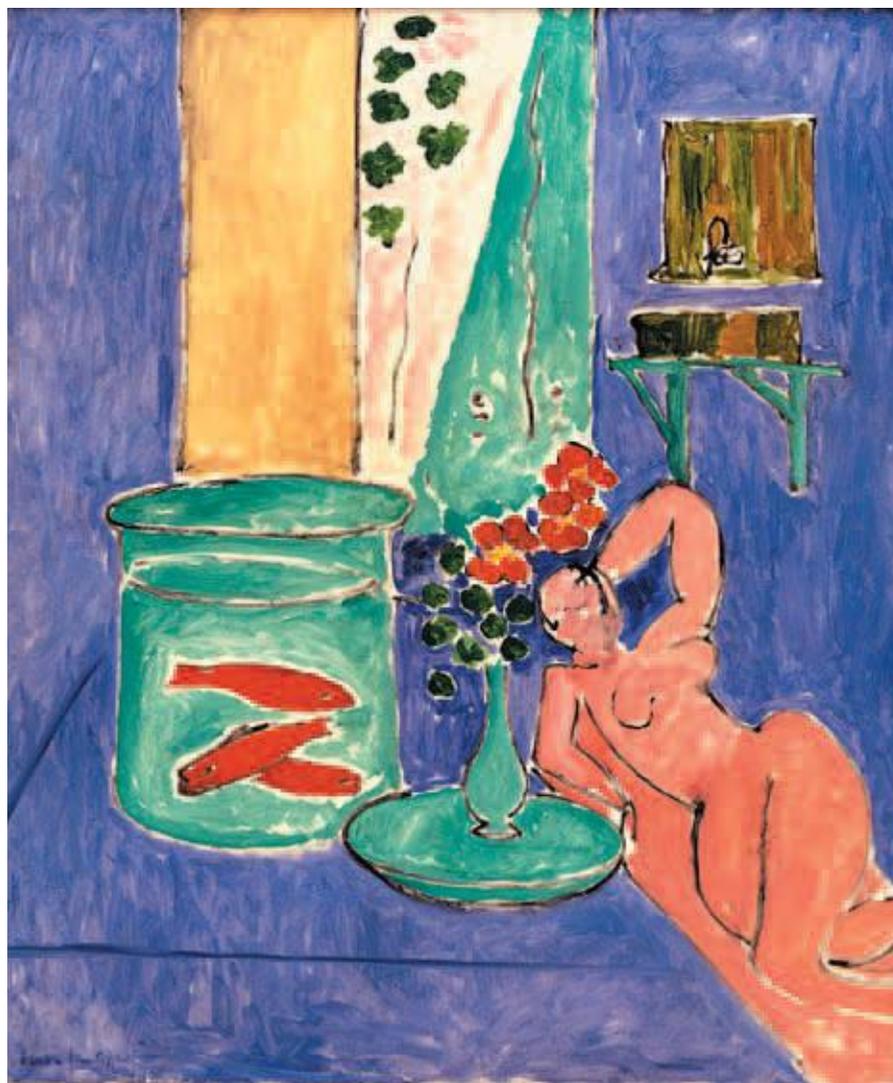
VOCABULARY

aesthetic relating to beauty
avant-garde new, experimental
depiction representation, the way something is shown
distortion quality of being slightly out of shape
sumptuous rich, luxurious colour.

eBookplus

MATISSE

Use the **Matisse** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works by this artist.



Goldfish and Sculpture,
Issy-les-Moulineaux 1912

oil on canvas

116.2 × 100.5 cm

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York

Gift of Mr and Mrs John Hay Whitney

Accn no. 199.1955, © 2010

Digital image: © The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence

CRITICAL STUDY

Matisse believed that using pure, flat colours could produce a more powerful effect than reproducing realistic colours. Colour is applied to create a sense of balance, with no attention to tone to show solidity or depth. Only the black outline suggests the objects are on a table, as the same blue is continued into what we take to be wall space.

The female nude, here a representation of a sculpture (as we learn from the title), was used by Matisse as a creative starting point or springboard. The **depiction** of the female nude is best understood in the context of the artist's search for an individual painting style rather than a concern for realistic portrayal. The shape of the nude is of no more importance than the bowl of

goldfish; they merely allow Matisse to express his inner vision. His works explore the figure in various ways — as a decorative element, the purity of the lines, the exaggerating of the physical curves. This **distortion** and expressive approach to the nude as subject is often cooled down by the severity of the flat colours, decorative backgrounds and simplicity of spatial arrangement (composition).

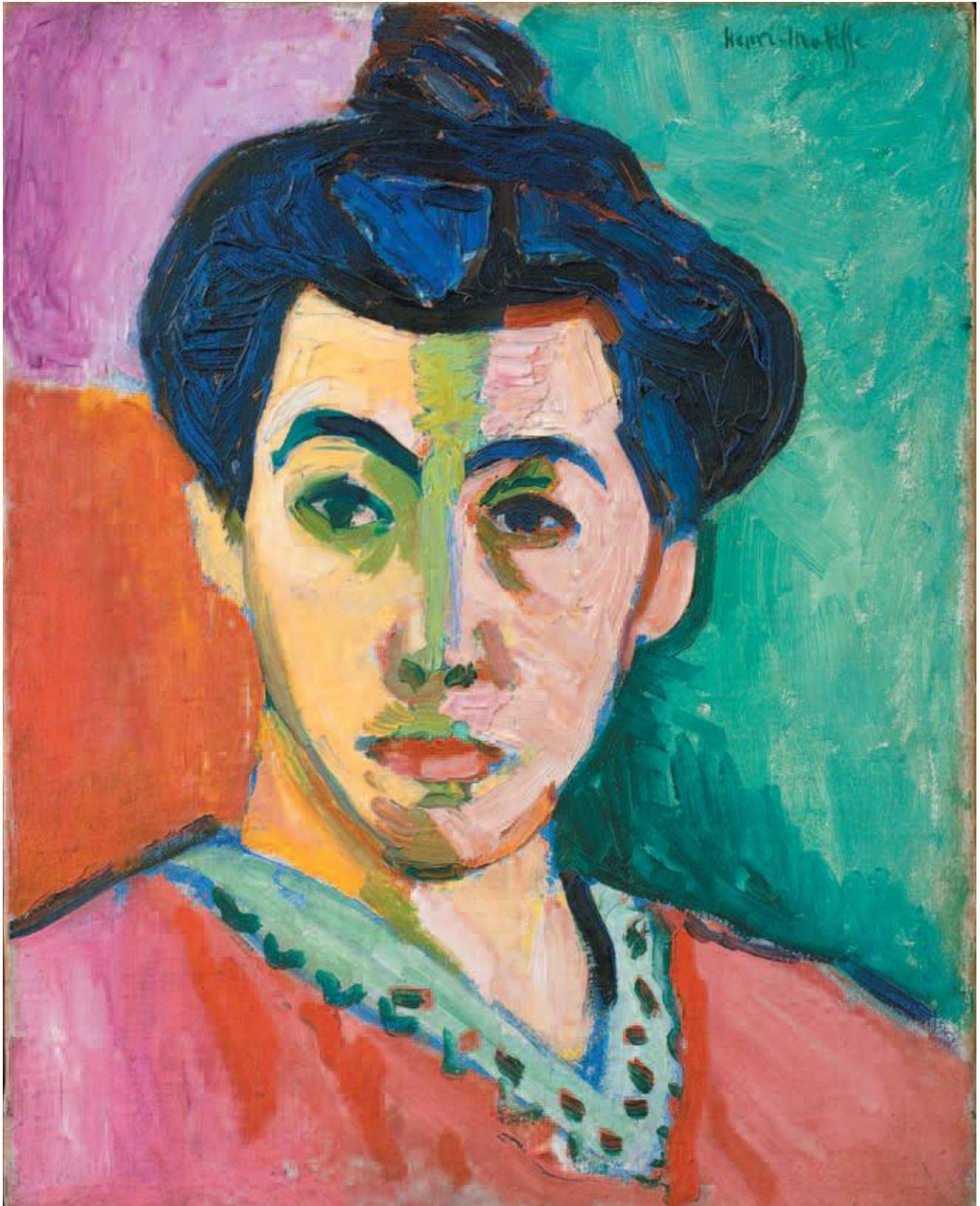
**Portrait of Madame Matisse,
The Green Line** 1905

oil on canvas

40.5 × 32.5 cm

Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen

© SMK Foto



CRITICAL STUDY

In this portrait the face is simplified in form, the **sumptuous** colour and bold lines giving it a sense of flatness. The heavy lines of her eyebrows and the blocks of colour of her mouth give the image an abstract quality, and the green line down the centre of the face checks any temptation to look for realistic detail. Yet surprisingly, the choices Matisse has made in outlining her eyes, giving her a strong jaw line and representing her piled-up hair all suggest a personal conception of an individual: this may not be how everyone sees Madame Matisse, but the artist has managed to combine his ideas on the expressive use of colour with his own emotive response.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

FAUVISM

A short-lived art movement centred on a group of artists who exhibited at the 1905 Paris Salon. Their paintings were called *Fauves* (wild beasts) by Louis Vauxelles, an art critic. The Fauves' general approach can be summarised by the following principles:

- light and space shown through colour
- dominance of flat areas of colour without tone or modelling
- a balance between emotion and decoration
- line as outline of shape and to create pattern
- composition used to express feelings
- pure, bold colours rather than imitation of colours in real life.

Fauve artists included Matisse, André Derain, Maurice de Vlaminck and Raoul Dufy.

Matisse was a Modernist. Modernism (late 1800s to the 1970s) strove to be original, to seek an **avant-garde** approach to painting. It championed innovation, new means of expression, either through ideas or emotions. While the traditional aim of painting was to create the illusion of reality and three-dimensional space, the Modernists wanted to break free from this restricted purpose. They wanted the paint and the canvas to be seen in their own right (this principle is now called 'art for art's sake'), so they explored the art medium itself and how it could be used for **aesthetic** effects. Matisse concentrated on the art elements of line and colour and tended to flatten objects and spaces.

With other Fauvists he introduced the idea of using luminous, pure, flat colours and severe compositions to express feeling and a sense of harmony, a kind of 'spiritual space'. His colours came from his imagination rather than reality. Here Matisse explains his approach to expression, how he uses composition to communicate his ideas and feelings, and why he simplifies the body into flat shapes and essential lines.

For me, expression does not reside in the passion that bursts forth on a face or that asserts itself through a violent movement. Expression is in the overall arrangement of my painting; the space occupied by the bodies, the empty spaces around them, the proportions, all of this plays a part. Composition is in the art of arranging in a decorative manner the various elements at the painter's disposal to express his feelings. In a painting, each part will be visible and will play its proper role, be it a principal or a secondary one. Everything that has no usefulness in the painting is therefore harmful. A painting comprises an overall harmony: any superfluous detail would steal, in the mind of the spectator, the place of another detail that is essential . . .

Suppose I have to paint a woman's body: first I give it grace, charm, then it is necessary to give it something more. I am going to condense the meaning of this body by seeking its essential lines. The charm will be less apparent at first, but it will emerge in the end from the new image that I will have obtained . . .

Henri Matisse, 'Propos sur la peinture', in *Ecrits et Propos sur l'Art*, Hermann, Paris, 1972

By simplifying his imagery Matisse creates a powerful, energetic work whose subject stands as a symbol for all females.

STUDYING ART

- 1 Read the above quote by Matisse and summarise his approach to composition and detail.
- 2 Matisse advised artists to seek the strongest colour effect possible. For him the content (subject) was of no importance. What evidence do you see in his paintings that he followed his own advice?
- 3 What makes Matisse's art Modernist?

ARTMAKING

- 1 Select an appropriate medium (e.g. printmaking, ink drawing or paint) and create your own imaginative interpretation of a figure relaxing in a room. Do a few draft compositions before you decide on your final work. You might also like to try different colour schemes. Concentrate on the decorative use of line. When you finish reflecting on what you have learned and the decisions you made, write an evaluation of your work in your Process Diary.
- 2 Scan into the computer a photo of a model or sportsperson from a magazine. Use your software tools (Corel or Photoshop) to remove tone and add unrealistic colours and patterns in a Fauve style.

Georges BRAQUE

(1882–1963, French)

FORM
painting

FRAME
Structural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The artwork stands alone as an art object for its own sake, having particular relevance in the artworld as a new approach to representing form.

VOCABULARY

collage a single artwork made up of an arrangement of diverse images and/or materials
facet a smooth, flat surface or plane, as of a gemstone
perception insight, awareness of senses
plane flat or level surface

eBookplus **BRAQUE**

Use the **Braque** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of works by this artist.



CUBISM (1907–25)

An avant-garde art movement that revolutionised European painting. The Cubists sought a radically new approach to painting, working from multiple viewpoints, analysing, dissecting and rearranging elements. Abandoning realistic representation and perspective, they concentrated instead on solidity and volume. Objects and background began to blend. The Cubists were influenced by the bold lines and simple abstracted shapes of African masks. The main Cubist artists were Braque, Pablo Picasso, Juan Gris and Fernand Léger.

Houses at L'Estaque 1908

oil on canvas

72.4 × 58.4 cm

Kunstmuseum, Berne

Photo: The Gallery Collection/Corbis

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

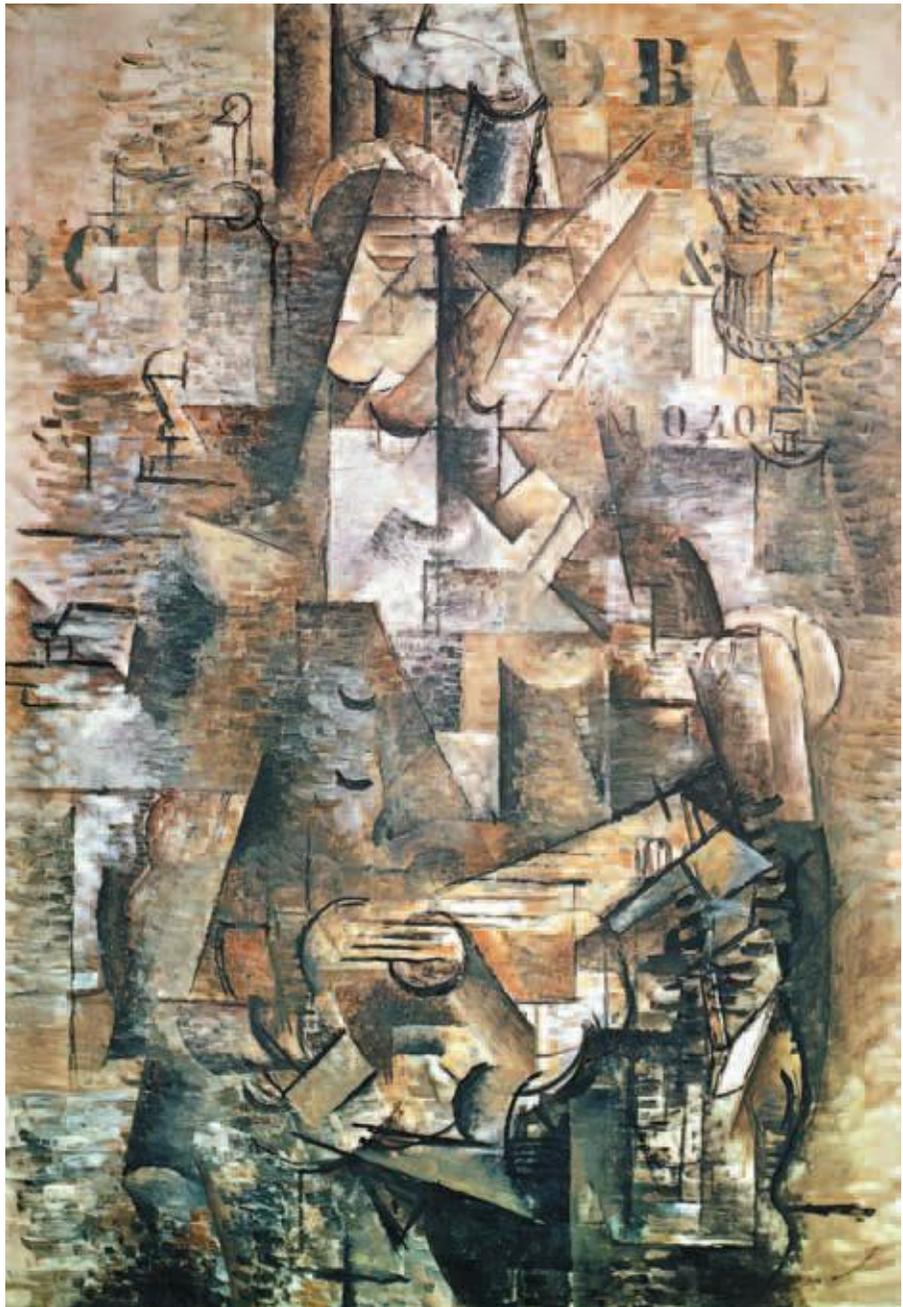
The landscape has been simplified into blocky, overlapping shapes. At this early stage of Cubism the light source is still placed on one side, but all detail (there are no windows or roof tiles) and gradations of tone have been replaced with strong outlines, thick brushstrokes and a reduced, muted colour scheme. The view is analysed in terms of angular, interacting **facets** or **planes**. Although the houses, now reduced to cubes, get smaller towards the top of the canvas, there is no real sense of perspective or depth.

In *The Portuguese* (page 186) Braque has created a complex arrangement in which the figure, objects and background areas seem to require our equal attention.

CRITICAL STUDY

CRITICAL STUDY

The Portuguese 1911
oil on canvas
Kunstmuseum, Basel



The surface is rich and textural, the brushstrokes obvious. In a development towards abstraction, the light now seems to be coming from all directions. The strong tonal contrasts and repeated diagonals cause a sense of frenzy or staccato rhythm. After the invention of the camera artists became more aware of different viewpoints and their effects on objects. Braque here combines different viewpoints and introduces letters and numbers as part of the composition, adding pattern and surface interest as well as referencing the modern world of cafés, with their signs and newspapers.

The colour, shades of a neutral monochrome, is not a major concern. It is the new way of representing reality that is important — the surface of the canvas itself and the painting method.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

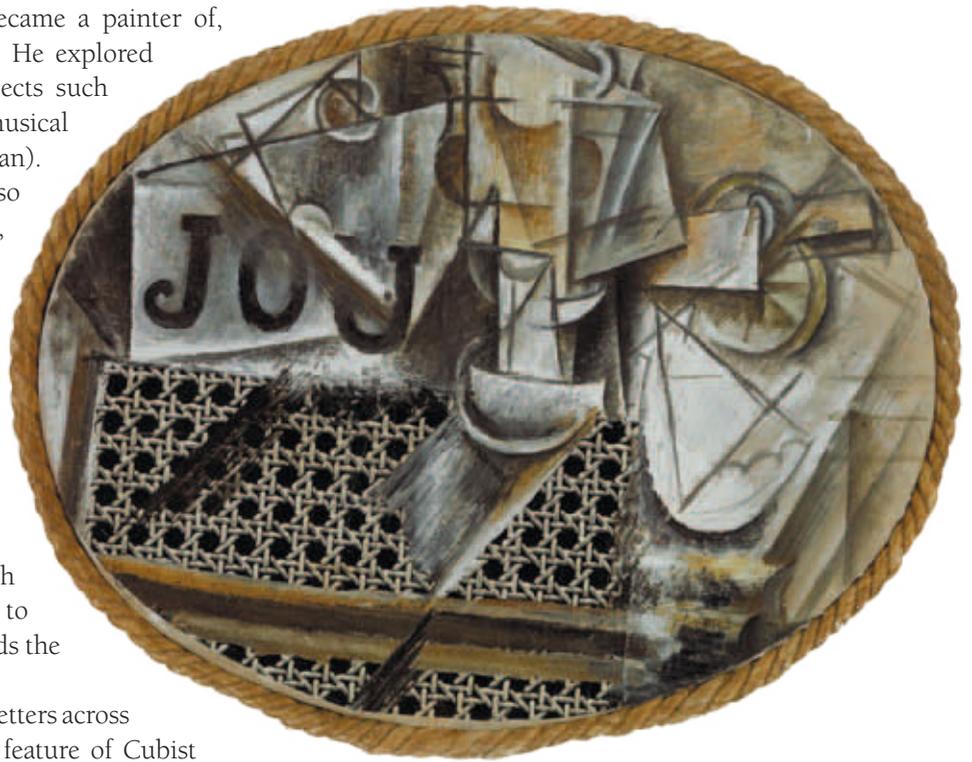
In his early career, Braque had experimented with the Fauve style (page 184) of bold colours, painting mainly landscapes. A meeting with Picasso in 1907 and an exhibition of Cézanne's works in the same year had a profound effect on Braque's approach to his art.

Braque abandoned colour and became a painter of, first, landscapes and then still lifes. He explored the tactile surfaces of everyday objects such as a glass, fans, newspapers and musical instruments (he was himself a musician).

Although Braque and Picasso developed the Cubist style together, often painting very similar subjects, their styles were slightly different. Picasso's approach used more lines to break up the surface, combining different viewpoints of the same subject as a single image. Braque's approach was more painterly, with more attention to tone. He was more concerned with the spaces between and around objects than with the objects themselves. He wanted to bring the background forward towards the viewer.

In 1911 Braque stencilled a row of letters across a canvas, introducing an important feature of Cubist painting. By 1913 he was including words and numbers and incorporating strips of paper in his paintings to add to the richness of the surface and to reflect modern life. These words were not chosen randomly: the title of a song or name of a musician was used over a still life of musical instruments; fragments of newspaper, wood-grain and wallpaper would have been recognised by many viewers. The symbols thus formed a bridge between everyday reality and the artist's **perception**. The artistic method of **collage** was born.

In 1911 Picasso took this a step further in the artwork *Still Life: The Cane Chair*, adding real rope as a frame and including in the work patterned wallpaper that imitated the wicker seat of a chair. The work therefore combined the painted surface, lettering, found objects and the illusion of found objects. Paintings were no longer windows into a realistic world but flat surfaces on which the artist could arrange and paint different textures and effects.



Pablo Picasso
Still Life: The Cane Chair 1911
 Picasso Exhibition, Paris
 Photo: © 2010, Scala, Florence
 Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

STUDYING ART

- 1 Explain some of the stylistic methods of early Cubism.
- 2 In what style did Braque paint before Cubism?
- 3 Explain Braque's use of tone, perspective, viewpoint and texture. Make notes in the form of a mind map (page xiv) before writing your response.

ESSAY QUESTION

Compare and contrast a still life by Braque and one by an artist of your choice (perhaps Salvador Dali or Margaret Olley). You might like to use a Venn diagram (page xviii) as a way of organising your thoughts before writing this essay.

ARTMAKING

Using musical instruments and the idea of rhythm as stimuli, design a linoprint.

or

Do a fragmented tonal drawing (Cubist style) of some sports equipment.

or

Scan into the computer an everyday object such as a pair of scissors or a paint tube. With computer software such as Photoshop or Corel Paint and Draw, create four versions, using different tools such as Paintbrush or smearing to add different textural effects. To introduce a sense of unity to the whole work, restrict your colour scheme to either harmonious colours (next to each other on the colour wheel, such as blues and purples) or complementary colours (opposite each other on the colour wheel, such as reds and greens, blues and oranges, or yellows and purples).

Ernst Ludwig KIRCHNER

[1880–1938, German]

FORM

painting

FRAME

Subjective — depicting the inner, emotional world of the human psyche

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kirchner interprets his contemporary world.

eBookplus

THE BERLIN STREET

Use the **Berlin Street** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an interactive website about Kirchner and the Berlin street.

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM

German Expressionism was founded in 1905 by artists who met at architectural school in Dresden, Germany, where they worked until they moved to Berlin in 1911. The primary motive of their art style was to *interiorise* their art — to work from their own responses and feelings rather than painting objectively what they saw. Influenced by Van Gogh, the Fauves, Edvard Munch, and traditional African and Oceanic artifacts (sculptures and masks), they used angular brushstrokes and brilliant, often clashing colours to express their surging emotions. They wanted to create a new style of painting to reflect the fast pace and sexually liberated lifestyle of their time. Paris was then the centre of modern art. Culturally it was a period of social tension in Germany. The Emperor, Kaiser Wilhelm II, held very conservative views on art, his own tastes being described as pompous and a bit kitsch. It was in this conventional environment that this group of radical German artists tried to provoke and shock through their art.

The pioneers of the German Expressionist artists, who were called Die Brücke (The Bridge), included Kirchner, Erich Heckel and Karl Schmidt-Rottluff.



Struggles (The Torments of Love) 1915
colour woodblock in black, red and blue
33.6 × 21.4 cm
Brücke-Museum, Berlin

CRITICAL STUDY

The angular nose, full lips and squared-off chin of the main figure in *Struggles (The Torments of Love)* (opposite) are typical of Kirchner's style. A feeling of anxiety is created by the sharp edges, elongation of features and bold contrast of areas of black against textured white patches. The brutal white–black contrasts, diagonal lines, and red and blue patches add to its abstract quality and emotional intensity. Here, as in several of his paintings, the backdrop is a portrait of a nude woman, a tension between the two being suggested by the way he stares directly forward while she thrusts her head back and clutches her chest, her claw-like hand reaching out as if to prevent the man from leaving. Kirchner has exaggerated the gestures and poses to heighten the undercurrent of aggression.

Self-Portrait as a Sick Man 1918–1920
oil on canvas
57 × 66 cm
Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich



In this self-portrait Kirchner uses intense, angular planes of colours that clash and overlap. The vivid lime green behind the vermillion red blanket on the bed focuses our attention on the face. Nervous brushstrokes, heavy black contours and angular features increase the emotional tension. Even the mountains seen through the window seem to be looming forward into the room rather than providing a sense of tranquility and depth.

Kirchner, along with other members of the German Expressionist group, painted landscapes, room interiors (often with nudes) and city life, using rapid, thick brushstrokes, simplified forms and vivid colour. Their responses to their world

CRITICAL STUDY**HISTORICAL STUDY**

came more from their inner psyche and emotions than from reality. Richly textured surfaces, angular distortion and heightened colour were the hallmarks of Kirchner's style.

Influenced by an exhibition held in Dresden of Van Gogh, the Fauves, Gustav Klimt and Edvard Munch, Kirchner strove to create a style that was erotic and primitive, demonstrating a love of life. The influence of the erotic or native is particularly evident in Kirchner's prints and paintings of faces, with their elongated faces, sunken eye sockets, squarish chins and obvious cheekbones.

Kirchner's studio contained African sculptures, Japanese parasols, wall hangings and textiles, creating an exotic environment in which to paint his models. While he was influenced by these varied sources, he used elements of their approach to form to create a unique expression of his dreams and concerns and his disquieting view of life. His earlier work hinted at the chaos and destruction of German society as World War I approached.

Kirchner, who referred to himself as the art movement's leader, saw in Expressionism an art that accepted the ugliness of reality, recognised suffering and used distortion, exaggerated forms and an unrealistic colour palette to express deep emotion and the human psyche.

While serving in the war he suffered a mental as well as physical breakdown and moved to Switzerland for his health.

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Kirchner is known equally for his graphic work (woodcut prints) and his paintings.

He saw the figure as the centre of all art, and employed models to pose naturally in his studio so he could approach them from different viewpoints, using a mirror in the room as well so he could quickly capture the essential form.

Originally heavily influenced by the Fauves and by Munch, the initial flatness of his vivid colour gave way to agitated, angular slashes of colour with the hint of more depth in his paintings.

Artist's statements

'A painter paints the appearances of things, not their objective correctness; in fact he creates new appearances of things . . .'

Quoted in Norbert Wolfe, *Ernst Ludwig Kirchner on the Edge of the Abyss of Time*, Taschen, 2003

'In 1906, Kirchner made a woodcut for the "Programm der Brücke," a striking foundation charter that contained the words: "With a belief in development, in a new generation of creative minds and connoisseurs of art, we summon the whole of youth . . . Everyone who gives direct and unadulterated expression to the things that compel him to creative activity is one of us".'

Quoted in *Icons of Art: The Twentieth Century*, Prestel Press, Munich

STUDYING ART

- 1 List some of the influences on the art of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner.
- 2 Describe Kirchner's approach to representing the face.

ESSAY QUESTION

Write a comparison between *Self-portrait of a Sick Man* by Kirchner and the *Mona Lisa* by Leonardo da Vinci. Consider the artists' intentions (the mood and effect they were trying to express, and their cultural/historical influences), brushstrokes and use of colour and tone, as well as the landscape as seen through the window. You might use a comparison sheet or Venn diagram to help organise your thoughts (pages x and xviii).

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create a self-portrait linocut print to express a mood of fear or anxiety.
- 2 Paint a room (perhaps your bedroom or art room), drawing on Kirchner's bold colours and angular, rapid brushstrokes.

FORMS

collages, room environments

FRAME

Structural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Schwitters responded to the values and traditions of his world by collecting 'rubbish' and making it into art.

VOCABULARY

environment art form that is an independent, three-dimensional space to be entered by the viewer

mundane everyday, ordinary

readymade a found object used in an artwork

eBookplus

KURT SCHWITTERS: TIMELINE

Use the **Schwitters timeline** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a timeline of the life and works of Kurt Schwitters.



Merz 19 1920

collage

sheet: 40.5 × 28.5 cm

image: 18.5 × 15 cm

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Connecticut, USA

Gift of Collection Société Anonyme

Accn no. 1941.681

© ARS, NY

Photo: Yale University Art Gallery/
Art Resource, NY

Kurt Schwitters' choice of unconventional materials gave his paintings added richness and individuality. He was able to transform rubbish, the discarded items of his surroundings, into strange and wonderful objects of beauty. To create his collages he used **readymades** that were largely the products of an urban culture. He cut out words at random from newspapers and unified them with paint to create exciting abstract textural work. *Merz 19* is composed of overlapping address labels, food stamps, coat checks and other fragments of paper with frayed (torn or worn) edges, all arranged against a blue background.

Schwitters created something new from the discarded fragments of the past, just as the postwar Germans had to do with their cities.

CRITICAL STUDY



Construction for Noble Ladies 1919
cardboard, wood, metal, and paint
102.87 × 83.82 cm
Los Angeles County Museum of Art,
Los Angeles, USA
Purchased with funds provided by
Mr and Mrs Norton Simon, the Junior
Arts Council, Mr and Mrs Frederick R.
Weisman, Mr and Mrs Taft Schreiber,
Hans de Schulthesis, Mr and Mrs Edwin
Janss, and Mr and Mrs Gifford Philips
(M.62.22)
Digital Image: © 2009 Museum
Associates/LACMA/Art Resource, NY,
ref. ART394341

CRITICAL STUDY

Kurt Schwitters collected useless paraphernalia and cast-off, broken objects, which he lovingly combined and infused with new life. Schwitters' artworks are made beautiful by his sensitive appreciation of composition, balance and subtle colour.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Schwitters completed his formal training at the Academy in Dresden and painted portraits for a living. He was not only a painter, but also a writer, a poet and a brilliant lecturer.

After the political crisis, the horrors of World War I and the feelings of displacement in Germany that followed the war, Schwitters turned away from his early naturalistic (realistic) painting to abstract collages and assemblages. He collected everyday objects, such as postcards, bus tickets and disused packaging, and arranged and stuck them down to create collages.

Collage was a Modernist technique that marked a moving away from personal artistic expression towards linking art with modern industrial production. Schwitters created art out of the discarded detritus of life. Nothing was too **mundane** to be made into a work of art. But we need to look at these fragments collected by Schwitters for their colour and form, not for their 'past life'.

Schwitters was very sensitive to surface and balance, and created a feeling of harmony in his artwork. The element of chance in his random collection of objects and the notion of his art as being 'meaningless' placed him as a Dadaist.

In the early days of the Dada movement, Schwitters worked with Theo van Doesburg, Tristan Tzara and Raoul Hausmann, organising campaigns throughout Germany, Holland and the former Czechoslovakia. These lecture tours on Dada created some controversy. In Holland, Schwitters became acquainted with the De Stijl group (page 208), who influenced his later style. When Schwitters was refused membership of the Berlin Dada group, however, he established his own branch in Hanover, which he named MERZ.

As well as collages, Schwitters created **environments**, thereby establishing a new art form. An environment was an independent, three-dimensional space to be entered by the viewer. This established a new kind of relationship between the object and the viewer.

Schwitters began his *Merzbau* in 1924 when a sculpture was returned to him. He added other material to it to create columns, then linked them, first by strings then by wooden structures that were eventually plastered over. The work grew in his house in Hanover. It contained areas dedicated to his artist friends; it even included some objects stolen from them, such as Moholy-Nagy's socks. The structure, which pushed up into the second storey, reaching to the ceiling, was adorned with broken wheels, matchboxes, stubs of paintbrushes, iron grilles, mirrors and cardboard boxes of old rags.

When the Nazis drove Schwitters from Germany and his original *Merzbau* was destroyed, he began a second one in Norway. Following the German invasion of Norway in 1941 Schwitters fled to England, where he began for the third time. After his death in 1948, the third *Merzbau* was rescued and preserved by the University of Newcastle, England.

DADA

Dada was a modern cultural movement of European artists, poets, playwrights and composers who sought to disrupt the public's acceptance of conventional standards and values. Politically they were mainly anarchists with strongly anti-war views. The Dadaists were active from 1915 to 1922. Dada art has been called anti-art. Its best-known exponents were Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 What real-life objects (called 'readymades' when used in art), or broken parts of them, can you find in *Construction for Noble Ladies*?
- 2 Write a half-page critical review in support of the idea that Schwitters was an innovative artist. Write mainly from the *Structural Frame*, evaluating his methods, techniques, symbolism, media and use of art elements (line, texture, direction etc.).
- 3 *Enrichment work*: Write a short paragraph giving your opinion of Schwitters' work from a *Cultural Frame*. For example, consider how successful you think it was as a challenge to tradition or how it revealed German society in the 1920s.

Historical study

- 4 Read the definition of Dada art above, then explain how Schwitters' art fits into this movement.
- 5 The *Merzbau* has been called 'one of the most unsaleable objects in the history of art'. Why do you think it was called unsaleable? Why then was it so important to the history of art?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Look up the American artist Joseph Cornell and the Australian artist Rosalie Gascoigne. Write a 500-word essay showing the influence of the work of Schwitters on either of these artists and their artmaking practice.

ARTMAKING

Use interesting found objects, textures from torn papers and text to make a statement about a subject of personal interest to you. Unify your composition with the addition of paint and various drawing media.

FORMS

painting,
sculpture

FRAMES

Cultural in its reflection of contemporary social issues; *Structural* in its efforts to create a new way of painting to represent movement

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The artist interprets his world — the confusion, noise and movement of the modern city.

VOCABULARY

dynamism great energy, liveliness
fragmented broken up into pieces, disintegrated
manifesto a group's statement of aims or policies

eBook plus

BOCCIONI

Use the **Boccioni** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a biography and online gallery of works by this artist.

CRITICAL STUDY

States of Mind I: The Farewells is part of a triptych depicting the exhilaration of movement as a train pulls out of a station. The steam engine itself is identifiable by its boldly stencilled numbers, similar to those used in Cubist paintings. In this work, Umberto Boccioni tries to capture the sensation of speed and the way it appears to dissolve images. We experience the noise, confusion and atmosphere of the city. Force lines convey the swirling motion of the departing train and also suggest embracing figures witnessing this event. Boccioni's forms are **fragmented**, in a similar way to Cubist art, but they take on a new, less distinct, fluid feel. Shapes seem to be drawn out and distorted by the speed of their movement. A vibration is set up within the forms themselves. We are not only looking at a train moving but also sensing its impact on its surroundings. His subject is modern city life in the industrial age.

States of Mind I: The Farewells 1911

oil on canvas

70.5 × 96.2 cm

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
Gift of Nelson A. Rockefeller

Accn no. 64.1979

Digital image: © 2010, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence





FUTURISM (c. 1909 – c. 1920)

Futurism was an Italian art and social movement in revolt against tradition and the past. Futurists wanted to show the speed and noise of modern life and create a new art based on dynamism and the machine.

Unique Forms of Continuity in Space

1913

Bronze

115 cm high

Private collection

In sculpture, Boccioni was able to truly resolve his idea that forms appear to extend or include the space around them when in motion. In the dynamic figure sculpture *Unique Forms of Continuity in Space*, speed is symbolised by a running figure. Boccioni encourages the viewer to embrace the new mechanical age. It is fitting that this work is in polished metal and has sharp, robot-like planes and a featureless face that almost suggests a helmet. It is also ironic that metal — which suggests permanence — is used to represent elusive speed. As the figure attempts to leap forward, the feet are anchored by the weight of the angular cubes. The strains on muscles caused by physical exertion are explored in this fluid sculpture.

Boccioni's interest in movement could be seen in his drawings even before his involvement with the emerging art movement called Futurism. Early in his career he drew horses, dancers and motorcars.

Futurism was founded by a group of artists and writers in Milan in 1909. It was a collaboration between the poet Marinetti and the artists Boccioni, Balla, Carra and Severini. They published their **manifesto** in the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro*.

CRITICAL STUDY

HISTORICAL STUDY

DISCUSSION

The Futurist Manifesto intended to convey that the artists should take as their ideal and influence the speed of the machine, in particular the automobile, rather than classical art. Debate or discuss past ideals of beauty versus the beauty of the machine.

(Paris was considered the art centre of the world at the time.) Their objective was to destroy tradition and approach art in a new way based on the speed of the new motorcar and the noise of the city. They wanted to relate art to contemporary life and technology.

The Futurists worshipped technology, exalted physical violence and glorified youth. They shared many of the ideals of fascism (a political ideology based on nationalism, rule by dictatorship and racism that became strong between the world wars, especially in Italy and Germany). The Futurist manifesto was written in violent, outspoken language. It was a radical declaration of their opinions on art, culture and society. In its early years, the Futurist movement was also strongly anti-feminist, and it remained aggressively masculine in its ideals. Futurists aimed at a wide audience, using newspapers, leaflets and public demonstrations to spread their ideas.

The Futurists were interested not only in the movement of the object but in the space in which the object moved — **dynamism**. This first wave of Futurism ended with the death of Boccioni (he was killed in a riding accident at the age of 34) and the outbreak of World War I.

Artists' statements

'We declare:

. . . that all subjects previously used must be swept aside in order to express our whirling life of steel, or pride, of fever and of speed . . .

. . . that movement and light destroy the materiality of bodies . . .'

Extracted from the Futurist Manifesto, 11 April 1910

'We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness. Courage, audacity [boldness, daring] and revolt will be the essential elements of our poetry. We affirm [state positively] that the world's magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty, the beauty of speed . . . A roaring automobile that seems to run like a machine-gun is more beautiful than the *Winged Victory of Samothrace* [an ancient Greek sculpture] . . . We will glorify war . . . destroy the museums, libraries and academies of every kind . . .'

Futurists quoted in 'Dynamic Visions', *The Great Artists: Their Lives, Works and Inspiration*, Marshall Cavendish Weekly Collection, no. 83, p. 2628

STUDYING ART

Historical study

Structural Frame

- 1 What methods or painting techniques did the Futurists use to show movement?
- 2 What symbols did the Futurists use to represent speed and the modern world?

Cultural Frame

What were the Futurists trying to make people more aware of or change in their society?

4 Postmodern Frame

In the first decades of the twentieth century the art of the Futurists was revolutionary, even shocking. Do the paintings and sculptures shown here still represent speed to us? What do you think has changed in our world of the early twenty-first century that makes us look on these works differently?

ESSAY QUESTION

Discuss how Boccioni represented the idea of movement in the two artworks shown here.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Critical study

- 1 Find another artwork by Boccioni. Write a 150- to 200-word critical review within the *Subjective Frame* (give your own feelings and opinions of the artwork).

Historical study

- 2 Look up the work of other Futurists, such as Giacomo Balla and Gino Severini. Discuss the influence of developments in cinematography on their art.

ARTMAKING

Create an artwork that explores the notion of movement. It may be a work on paper or a piece of sculpture, or you could attempt a series of photographs documenting sequential movement.

Robert DELAUNAY

(1885–1941, French)

FORM

painting

FRAME

Structural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Delaunay's artworks are his response to the changing world. They reflect the modern trend towards 'art for art's sake', a concentration on art elements rather than subject.

VOCABULARY

Cubism a modern art movement (c. 1907–25) that introduced a radically new approach to painting, abandoning realistic representation, working from multiple viewpoints, analysing, fragmenting and rearranging elements

non-objective abstract, without reference to real objects

eBookplus

DELAUNAY

Use the **Delaunay** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore selected works by this artist.



La Tour Eiffel 1910
Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland
Photo: White Images/Scala, Florence

In *La Tour Eiffel*, Delaunay is responding to the movement, vitality and technological changes of the modern world. The Eiffel Tower in Paris was the symbol of engineering advances and the rise of the modern city; when climbed,

CRITICAL STUDY

it presented people with a new viewpoint of their world. In Delaunay's painting, the unusual angles and view of the tower add to the excitement.

This is one of Delaunay's early experiments with new ways of painting objects, concentrating on colour. His investigations into theories of colour led to his purely abstract paintings. We see hints of the arc or semicircular shapes that were to dominate his later work. Colour, although bold, is not always flatly applied. Delaunay also creates surface variety through his use of tone. It is a strange yet appealing mix of pattern and design with expressive brushstroke areas. Delaunay painted the Eiffel Tower about thirty times.



Circular Forms — Sun and Moon 1912–13

oil on canvas

200 × 197 cm

Collection: Kunsthhaus, Zürich

Photo: © 2001 Kunsthhaus Zürich

CRITICAL STUDY

Circular Forms — Sun and Moon is a purely abstract painting, open to the viewer's interpretation. What we experience is a circular rhythm created by luminous colour. In places the colours are softly blended while in other areas they form definite geometric shapes. Some areas seem to float close to the viewer while others gently melt behind.

Robert Delaunay was interested in the light experiments of the Impressionists and the Post-Impressionists Paul Gauguin (page 174) and Georges Seurat. He was also intrigued by the way **Cubism** demolished the traditional approach to painting. He began to paint in the Cubist manner of simplifying objects into geometric shapes.

Delaunay worked closely with his wife, Sonia, also an artist. In seeking to restore the movement and colour in the Cubist style of painting, they developed a style more reliant on colour and shape. This resulted in a purely abstract form of painting.

The **non-objective** style developed by the Delaunays was termed 'Orphism'. During 1912 and 1913 they painted pictures in which rhythmic colour contrasts and harmonies were the subject matter. They used colour as an art element alone without any reference to objects in the real world. Yet they also wanted their art to reflect the culture of their time. They were interested in the connections between art, mathematics and music.

Although their art may appear to be based purely on colour, symbols and theories of abstraction, they essentially painted with passion what they felt and believed. Robert Delaunay was interested in an art adapted to architecture, while Sonia extended her paintings into fabrics and fashion design.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Describe how Robert Delaunay uses colour in *La Tour Eiffel*.
- 2 How is Delaunay's work an example of the *Structural Frame*?
- 3 Write your own critical evaluation of Delaunay's *La Tour Eiffel*.

Historical study

- 4 Art historical writers often refer to influences on an artist's work in order to place them within the history of art. Who or what style of art influenced Robert Delaunay?
- 5 What does Delaunay's *La Tour Eiffel* have in common with:
 - (a) Cubism (page 185)?
 - (b) Futurism (page 195)?
- 6 Look at both works by Delaunay and explain how his paintings reflect life and art in Paris in the early twentieth century (*Cultural Frame*).

ARTMAKING

Select an object or structure that represents today's society. Create reference drawings of the object at various angles and use these as a starting point for an artwork. You might consider it as a drawing or painting, perhaps with collage, diagrams or text added.

Salvador DALI

(1904–1989, Spanish)

FORM

painting

FRAMES

Subjective — in its highly imaginative, fantastical and irrational images and their emotional effect on the viewer

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dali's subjects are drawn mostly from his dreams and fantasies. The symbolism is often a mystery to us. The link between artist and artwork is much stronger than that between the artist and the real world. The viewer is amused, intrigued or shocked by the unusual juxtaposing of images.

VOCABULARY

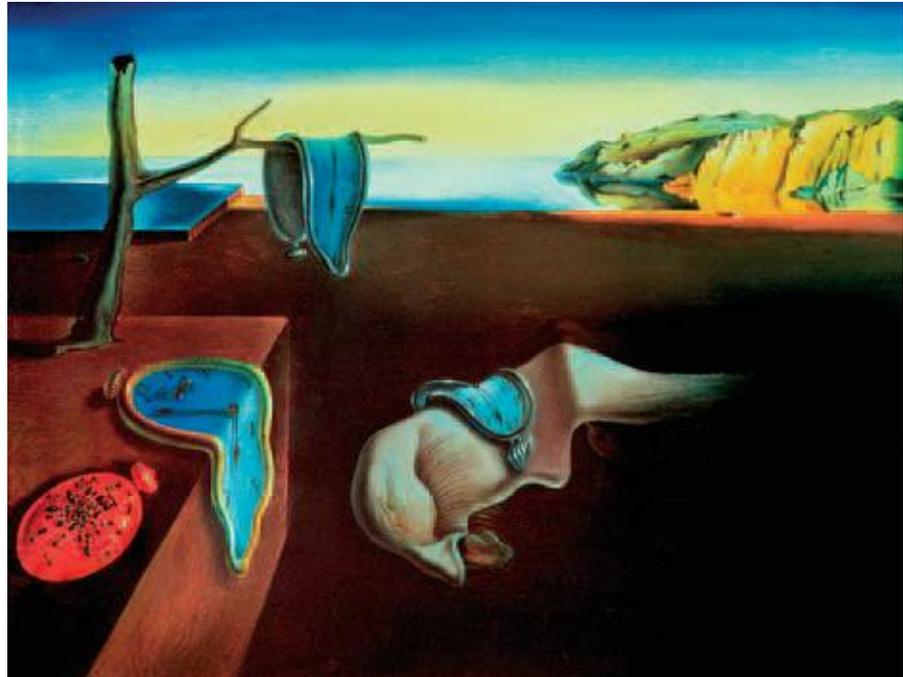
incongruous unlikely together, an unusual combination
malleable flexible, can be reshaped

eBook plus

SALVADOR DALI GALLERY

Use the **Salvador Dali Gallery** weblink in your eBookPLUS to watch videos and view a gallery of works by the artist.

The Persistence of Memory 1931
oil on canvas
24.1 × 33 cm
Museum of Modern Art, New York
© Salvador Dali
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



CRITICAL STUDY

SURREALISM (1920s–)

An avant-garde cultural movement and highly imaginative art style whose focus was the artist's dreams and the subconscious. The Surrealist manifesto, written by André Breton in 1924, states as an aim 'to resolve the previously contradictory conditions of dream and reality into an absolute reality, a super reality'. Surrealism went beyond realism, often responding to the subconscious to create fantastic dream-world compositions of detailed, realistic objects.

Although small, this painting is highly intriguing. The distant, peaceful still of early morning in the port area near his home seems **incongruous** with the unreal imagery in the foreground, yet Dali has made it into a unified composition. The viewer's eye is led from the watch on the bench (bottom left) across to the melting clock over the 'horse's saddle' to the mountains in the distance to the right then across to the branch and back down to the watch. The floppiness of the clocks is a brilliant concept, disturbing our ideas of time as rational and measurable. The hard metal has become as **malleable** as rubber. (Dali has said that the idea for this painting came to him when he was contemplating Camembert cheese and how it changes state when warmed.) Dali himself is present in this work: if you turn your head to the left, the 'saddle' transforms into a profile of Dali — the prominent nose, long eyelashes and chin.

As is often the case in Dali's work, there is an element of surprise as well as wit, and the imagery stays in the viewer's mind. Many of his works have become cultural symbols or icons: for example, the crawling ants (as seen here on the fob watch and in many of his other paintings) have been used in a TV underwear commercial.

A still life is an artwork whose subject is an arrangement of inanimate (non-living) objects. Here Dali has wittily painted a still life in which the objects are shown in motion, as if they have a life of their own. Among other strange happenings, water flows upwards from the bottle, defying gravity; a knife floats

above a table and a peach flies through the air. One of the intriguing aspects of this unreal, dreamlike work is that each object is painted in a realistic manner with great technical skill.



Dalí was born in Spain, and studied in Barcelona and Madrid. He spent his early life in the little Catalan town of Figueras in north-eastern Spain, near the Mediterranean fishing village and port where he later built his home just below the mountains. This area is the setting for the great majority of his works. His house in Figueras is now a museum to his incredible imagination and productivity, including paintings, whole-room installations, sculptures, drawings and jewellery designs. His wife Gala was not only a great supporter and promoter of his work but often appeared in his paintings as a type of goddess.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Nature Morte Vivante (Still Life — Fast Moving) 1956

oil on canvas
126 × 160 cm
Collection of the Salvador Dalí Museum, Inc., St Petersburg, FL, 2010
© Salvador Dalí. Fundación Gala-Salvador Dalí/ARS 2010
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In 1929 Dalí established himself as a member of the Paris-based Surrealism art movement, which had been influenced by the psychoanalytical theories of Sigmund Freud and his ‘interpretation of dreams’, which explored the subconscious mind, or what he called the *unconscious*. The Surrealists created artworks freed from the rational world, responding to their dreams, the element of chance and their own fertile imaginations.

Dalí developed his own version of Surrealism — often referred to as the ‘paranoiac-critical method’ — involving various forms of irrational association. Not only are unusual objects combined, such as a chest of drawers in a woman’s leg (*Burning Giraffe*), but what looks like one thing, with a slight shift in the

viewer's focus, mutates into another — in *Invisible Sleeping Woman, Horse, Lion* 1930 the female nude becomes a lion or a horse. These are just some of the unpredictable images in Dali's highly original, imaginative paintings. Many are placed in a landscape setting with a high horizon, creating a sense of great distance. Some have barren rocks or hills in the distance and a sky that darkens towards the top of the painting, suggesting an approaching storm. Dali's images set up a mood of foreboding — a sense that something bad is about to happen.

Dali painted his wildest dreams and nightmares. His work is distinctive in that no matter how bizarre the overall effect, each individual object or landscape is painted with meticulous attention to detail and realism. Technically he applies an 'academic' style to achieve photographic accuracy. His most famous works, produced during the period 1929–39, were in this style. The outbreak of World War II prompted Dali to flee to the United States, where he stayed for eight years, achieving celebrity status there before returning to Spain. His reputation was due in part to his eccentric look (the trademark upturned waxed moustache) and exhibitionist personality.

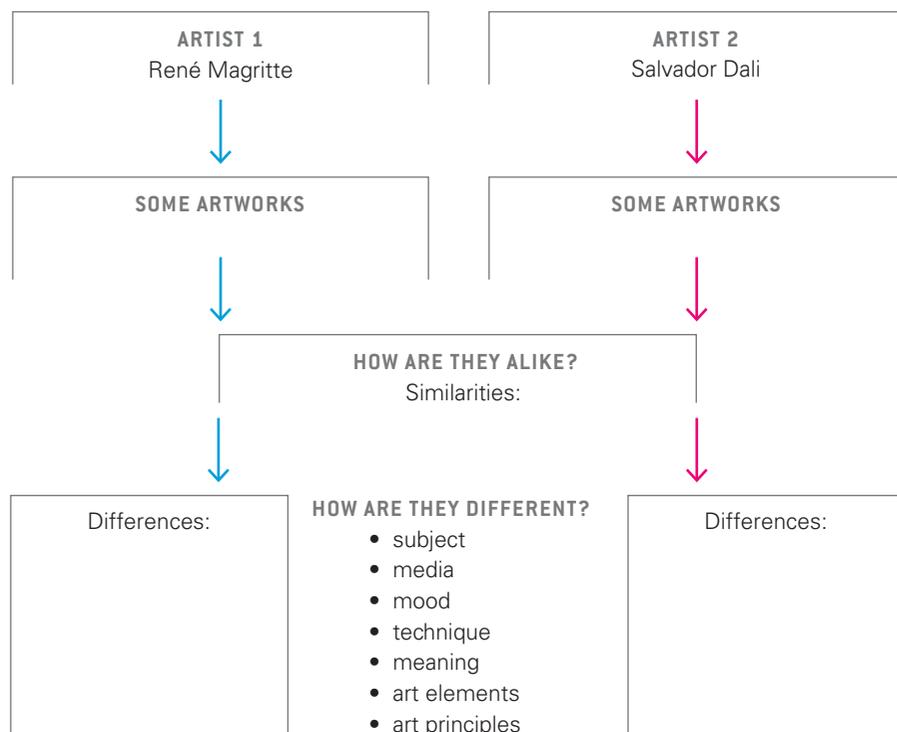
STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Give two explanations or characteristics of Dali's painting style.
- 2 Which part of the painting *Nature Morte Vivante (Still Life — Fast Moving)* do you like most and why? Consider what you find clever or amusing about it.
- 3 Dali was interested in the hidden meanings behind an innocent image. Write a wild, imaginative story about what could be happening in *Nature Morte Vivante* (or a particular section of this painting).
- 4 How does Dali create a feeling of depth in *The Persistence of Memory*?
- 5 Discuss how Dali alters reality.
- 6 What is your own reaction to his painting? How does it make you feel? What do you think of? Does it remind you of any music clips, films or advertising? If so, why?

Historical study

- 7 Look at the work of Magritte (page 203), and compare it with Dali's work. You might like to use a comparison chart like the one below.



ARTMAKING

Create your own Surrealist artwork on the computer. Begin with a landscape and add unusual or incongruous objects (things that don't seem to belong). Play around with the colour to add to a 'surreal' fantasy effect. You might like to work in pairs, sharing your ideas and helping each other with the technology side.

FORM

painting

FRAME

Subjective

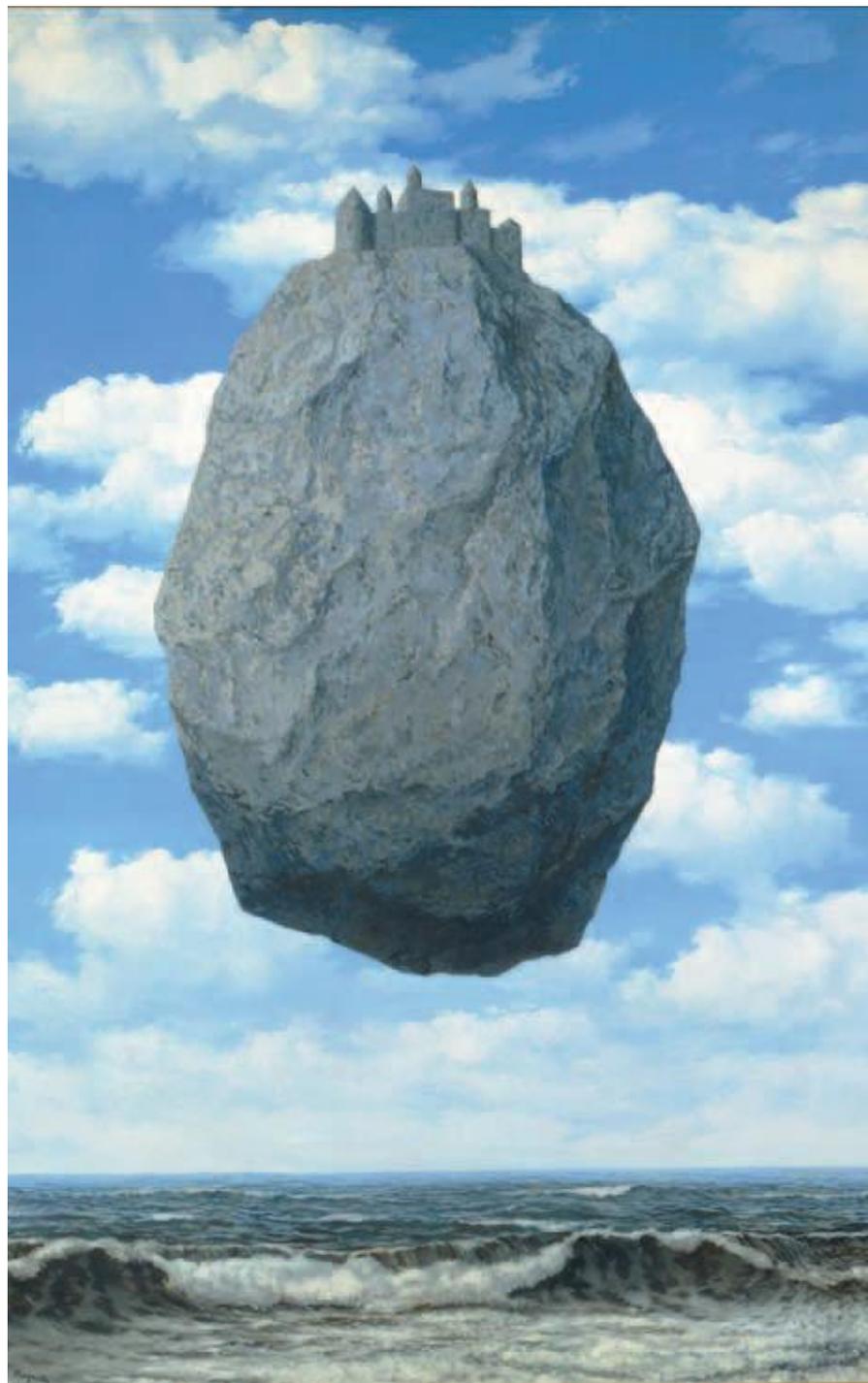
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Magritte's artworks are his unique creative interpretation of reality. They confront the audience's normal views about what we see and believe.

eBookplus

MAGRITTE MUSEUM

Use the **Magritte museum** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore the life and works of this artist.



DISCUSSION

Illusion may be defined as something that deceives or gives a false impression. We can see that Magritte's art involves illusion. But could we not say that all landscape paintings are illusions? We are led to believe the depth, roundness and textures we see, when in fact they are merely paint on a flat surface.

The Chateau of the Pyrenees 1959

oil on canvas

200 × 130 cm

Photo © Collection: The Israel Museum, Jerusalem

© René Magritte, 1959/ADAGP

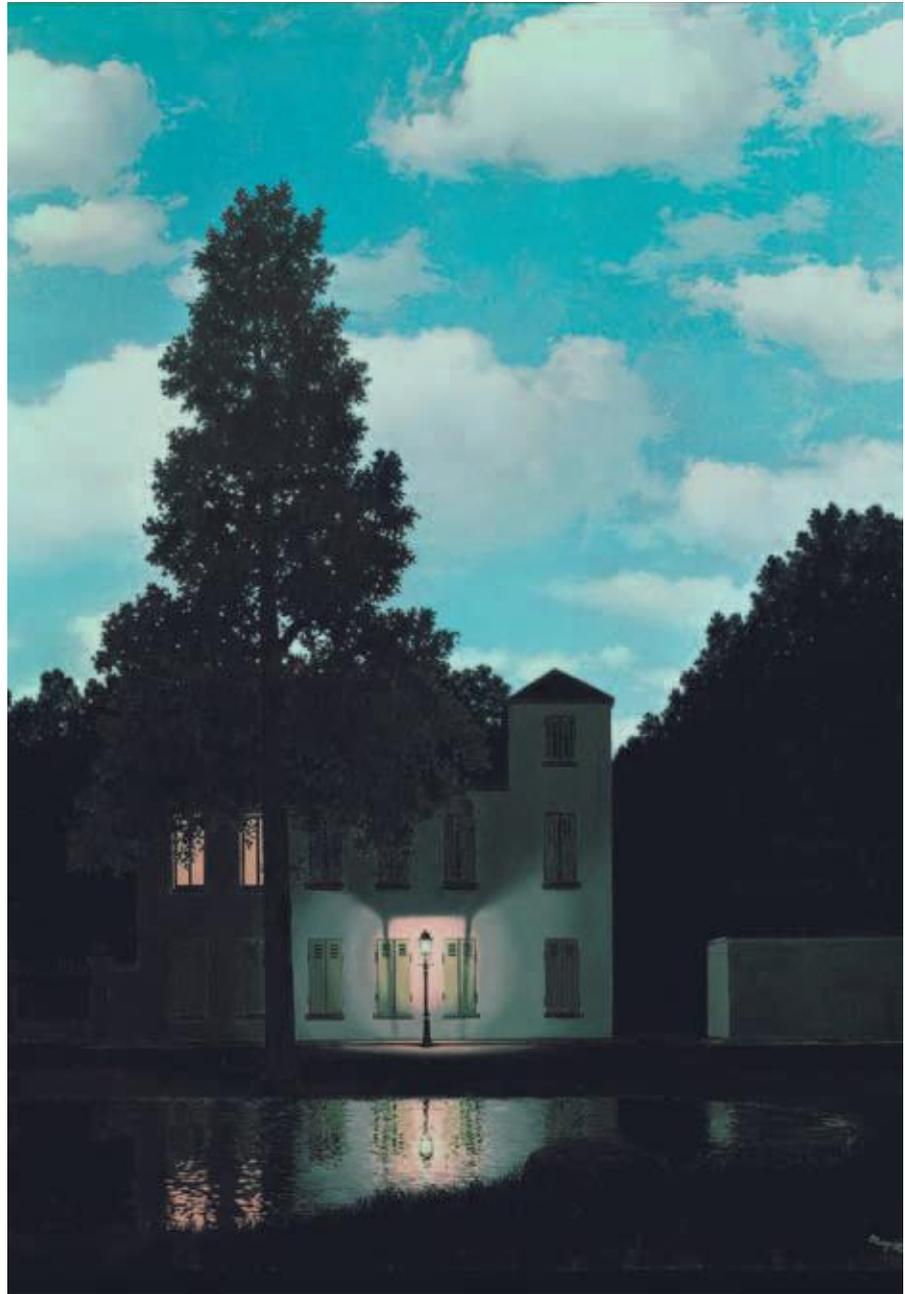
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In *The Chateau of the Pyrenees*, the magic or fantasy arises from the incongruity of elements. A huge boulder hovers between the peaceful blue sky with its fluffy clouds and the windswept sea. The castle atop the boulder gives an idea of the

CRITICAL STUDY

size of the gigantic rock. It has immense weight yet appears weightless. What has happened to the laws of gravity? Without the boulder, the seascape would produce a feeling of calm, but with it there is tension. As in Dali's work, the precise realism of the individual elements adds to the surprise and humour of the painting.

As with many of Magritte's works, we give it a quick glance and accept the reality, before further examination reveals the impossibilities and contradictions. This beautiful scene, displaying superb craftsmanship in the depiction of the elements of nature, is an illusion. Defying visual and scientific logic, objects are presented to us anew, with entirely unexpected attributes. This is perhaps the most exciting and challenging form of Surrealism (page 200). Magritte baffles the viewer with his dream images. This work gives a hint of Magritte's creative powers and sharp mind.



The Empire of Lights 1954
146 × 114 cm
Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts
de Belgique
© Charly Herscovici, c/o SABAM
Belgium, 2003

CRITICAL STUDY

At first *The Empire of Lights* registers with the viewer as a normal, realistically painted street scene. But as usual Magritte is playing tricks with the way we see and expect normality. It is in fact a night street scene under a daytime sky.

I have reproduced different concepts in *The Empire of Lights*, namely a nocturnal landscape and a sky as we see it during the daytime. The landscape leads us to think of night, the sky of day. In my opinion, this simultaneity of day and night has the power to surprise and to charm. This charm I call poetry.

The artist quoted in *René Magritte: Thought rendered visible*, Taschen, p. 7

'[Magritte's] images were stories first, formal paintings second . . . they [the narratives] were snapshots of the impossible . . . As a master of puzzle painting Magritte had no equal and, although his influence on the formation of images (and how people decode them) has been wide, he has had no real successors . . . an apple, a comb, a derby hat, a cloud, a bird cage, a street of prim suburban houses, a businessman in a dark topcoat . . . There was not much in this repertoire [list or collection] of images, taken one by one, that an average Belgian clerk might not have seen in the course of an average day in 1935. But Magritte's combinations were another thing entirely . . .'

Magritte's work is sometimes referred to as magic realism, an offshoot of Surrealism. This is because he creates fantasies of the commonplace rather than the dream world of the unconscious mind. His work is a unique blending of the strange and the ordinary. He often confronts us with an ironic twist to our normal ways of seeing and understanding. Magritte makes this point in his meticulously rendered, realistic painting of a smoker's pipe, called *The Treachery of Images* 1828–29. Underneath the pipe the artist has written *Ceci n'est pas une pipe* ('This is not a pipe'). We see it as a pipe, but the words remind us that it is merely a *painting* of a pipe.

In *Human Condition* the painting shows an open window with an easel in front of it. The canvas on the easel bears a picture of the view through the window, and this picture exactly matches the view itself, so there is a 'play' between the image and reality. Magritte was concerned not just with humour or creating shocks but with the deeper aspects of language and images, the way meanings are conveyed and can be changed by their context. The viewer becomes confused between the real and the imaginary. This is Magritte's unique form of creativity and contribution to modern art.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 A critic's role is to evaluate or give opinions on an artist's work. What do you think is Greenberg's opinion of Magritte's work?
- 2 A critic can also help explain the subject matter and meaning of an artist's work and his techniques. What information do you gain about Magritte's paintings from this piece of art critical writing by Greenberg?
- 3 *Subjective Frame*
How would you feel if you were in the castle shown in *The Chateau of the Pyrenees*? Does it remind you of a tale in a book or a poem?

Postmodern Frame

- 4 How is this work different from a normal landscape in art?
- 5 Is this work less surprising to us in today's world than it would have been in 1959? What has changed? Are we more used to seeing images like this? Why or where?

Historical study

- 6 In what ways is Magritte's work Surrealist and how is it unique?

CRITICAL PRACTICE

Clement Greenberg, American Modernist art critic, in *Collected Essays and Criticism*, vol. 2, edited by John O'Brian, University of Chicago Press, 1986

HISTORICAL STUDY

FURTHER RESEARCH

Subjective Frame

Write a 500-word essay analysing the element of fantasy and evidence of imagination in the works of Magritte and one other Surrealist artist. You might consider Dali (page 200), Giorgio de Chirico or Marc Chagall. Refer to at least two examples of the work of each artist.

FORM

painting

FRAME

Structural

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Mondrian created his own system of representing the order of the universe. He was one of the first artists to create non-objective, purely abstract artworks.

eBookplus

MONDRIAN

Use the **Mondrian** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and works of this artist.



The Gray Tree 1911

oil on canvas

79.7 × 109.1 cm

Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, Netherlands

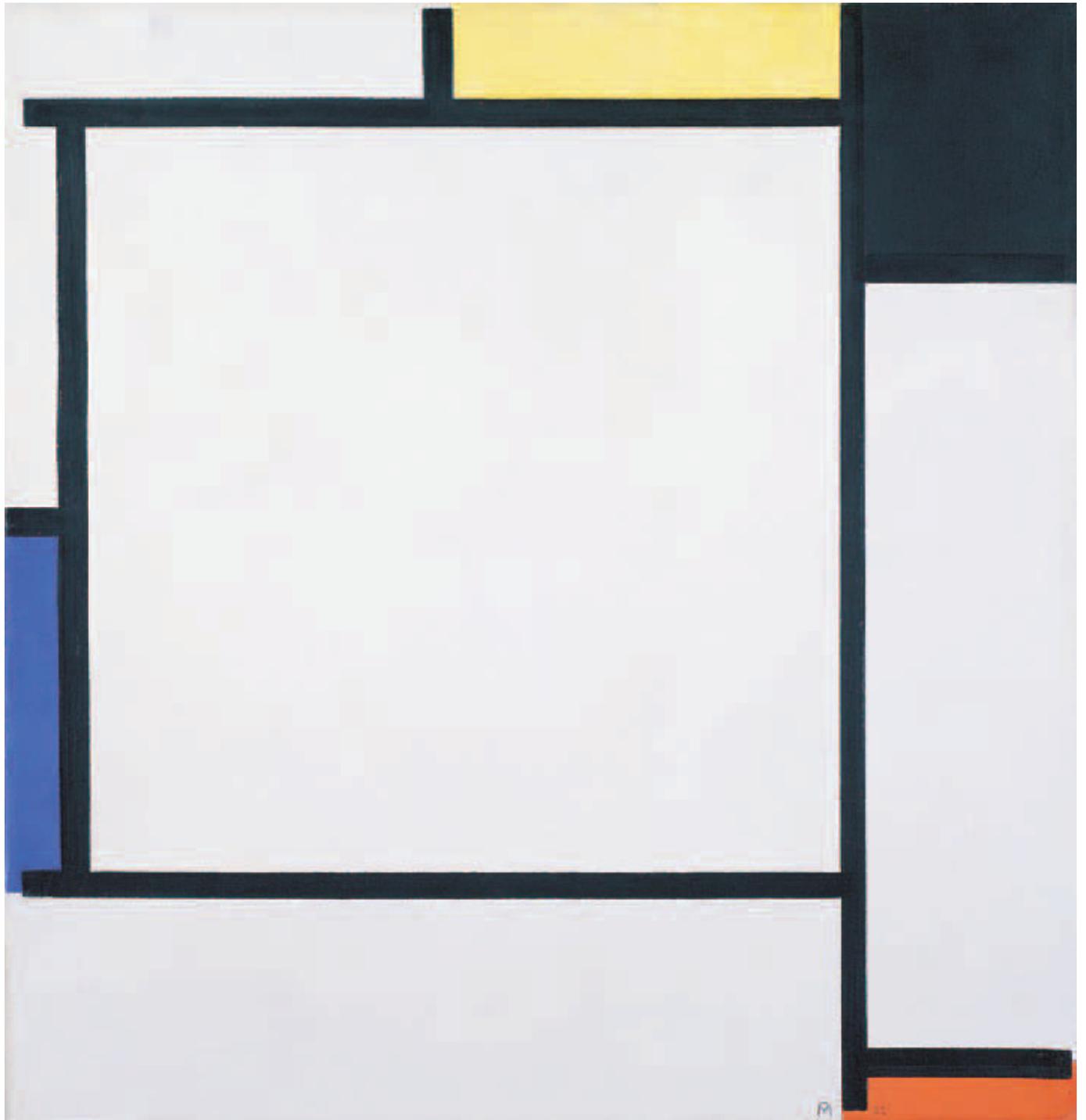
© 2010 Mondrian/Holtzman Trust, c/o HCR International Virginia

CRITICAL STUDY

The tangle of branches in *The Gray Tree* has become a pattern of black lines on the surface of the canvas, extending all the way to the edges. Piet Mondrian realised that nature had a structure and a regularity that repeated itself. We see here the influence of Cubism (page 185) and Mondrian's interest in the structure of the tree. He is beginning to simplify the branches to horizontal and vertical lines. At this stage, we can still see the trunk of the tree. In later artworks, this disappears and the canvas becomes an all-over pattern.

CRITICAL STUDY

Tableau 2 is Mondrian in his purest form. By this stage, he has reduced his colours to the primaries and black and white, and uses only horizontals and verticals. Balance was of prime importance. *Tableau 2* is structured around a dominant grey-white shape that is almost square. He frames this with black lines and limits his colour to small rectangles and squares on the outer edge. He adopts a device — often used in De Stijl design (see page 208) — of stopping lines just before they reach the edge, thus leaving the work compact and with a sense of completeness.



Until 1908 Mondrian's work featured naturalistic examples of landscape and still life painting. By 1911 he had begun to work in a Cubist style, still using nature as his subject. From 1912 to 1914, after moving to Paris, he began to develop an independent abstract style. At this time, he created a series of paintings of trees (see, for example, *The Gray Tree*) that became progressively more abstract until the branches were reduced to a linear network. This was a momentous step in painting. In the past, paintings had always had a recognisable subject, a focus (area of interest) and a general dividing of the canvas to create a sense of 'weight' towards the bottom. Now Mondrian abandoned these conventions and scattered his repeated shapes and lines across the entire surface. His paintings had become abstract grids (a system of horizontals and verticals).

HISTORICAL STUDY

***Tableau 2, with Yellow, Black, Blue, Red and Gray* 1922**

oil on canvas

55.6 × 53.4 cm

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York

Accn no. 51.1309

© 2010, Mondrian/Holtzman Trust, c/o HCR International, Virginia

DE STIJL

A Dutch group of artists who used geometric shapes, mainly squares and rectangles (horizontals, verticals and occasionally diagonals), and usually primary colours plus black and white.

NEOPLASTICISM

Mondrian's name for his own art, being a pure, stricter form of De Stijl, with great simplification, use of mainly primary colours and ordered straight lines.

Mondrian was visiting the Netherlands in 1914 when World War I broke out, preventing his return to Paris. In his art, he continued to reduce his colours and restrict himself to geometric shapes, eventually formulating his non-objective Neoplastic style. Neoplasticism was characterised by great simplification and the use of mainly primary colours and ordered, straight lines.

In 1917 Mondrian became one of the founders of De Stijl, a group that believed in abstraction and simplification and extended their design ideas into furniture, posters and architecture. Their lofty ideals included creating art and design that represented the 'essence of the world', the 'substance of all things' and the 'spirit and future of mankind'.

Mondrian broke with the De Stijl group in 1925 when another member, Theo van Doesburg, reintroduced diagonals into his work. Mondrian's aim was to create an objective (non-emotional) art that was highly disciplined and would reflect the order of the universe.

Mondrian left Holland in 1938 and travelled to London, where his studio was destroyed in the bombing at the start of World War II. After two years he went to New York, where his compositions became slightly more colourful, reflecting the faster pace and rhythms of the jazz and 'boogie-woogie' music he so admired (see, for example, *Broadway Boogie Woogie* 1932).

Artist's statements

'All painting is composed of line and colour. Hence they must be freed from themselves.'

Quoted in G. Hopwood, *Handbook of Art*, North Balwyn, Vic., 1983, p. 120

'[My philosophy of art is] concerned with the pure relationships of lines and pure colours, because only the pure relationships of pure constructive elements can achieve a pure beauty.'

Quoted in M. K. Symonds et al., *The Visual Arts*, 4th edn, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1993, p. 136

CLASS DEBATE

Take sides to debate the merits of these two paintings by Mondrian.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

Structural Frame

- 1 How is Mondrian's painting *Tableau 2* an excellent example of an artist working from the *Structural Frame*?
- 2 Draw a Mondrian painting and see how slight shifts in the proportions destroy the wonderful asymmetrical (not symmetrical) balance he achieves.
- 3 Imagine you are an art critic at the time of an exhibition of Mondrian's first purely abstract works, including *Tableau 2*. Using mainly the *Structural Frame*, write a critical review suitable for an art magazine of the time.
- 4 *Postmodern Frame*
Mondrian's work was revolutionary for his time, an important milestone in art history. Do you consider *Tableau 2* to be a significant artwork today or is it important only for its historical and monetary value?

Historical study

- 5 How did Mondrian's work develop over time?
- 6 Why did he break with the De Stijl group?
- 7 In what ways does Mondrian's work reflect the general Modernist idea of the avant-garde (striving to create something new and original to keep up with the times)?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Both Piet Mondrian and Wassily Kandinsky reached total abstraction in their work after first painting landscapes. How do their abstract styles differ? Consider the *frames* from which they mainly worked.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create a grid and infill each rectangle with only horizontal and vertical lines. Paint in bold, bright colours. Create an overall rhythm and sense of unity and aim for a feeling of perfection.
- 2 Adapt Mondrian's method of painting used in *The Gray Tree* (use of greys and brushstrokes) to a still life arrangement.

Jasper JOHNS

(b. 1930, American)

FORMS

painting, sculpture

FRAME

Cultural — His choice of subject reflects the American way of life.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Johns responded to everyday life in America, choosing as his subject everyday and mass-produced objects. His work provides a link between the Abstract Expressionists and the Pop artists.

eBookplus

THE WORK OF JASPER JOHNS

Use the **Jasper Johns** weblink in your eBookPLUS to watch a video of curator Jeffrey Weiss discussing the work of this artist.



Flag 1954 [dated on the reverse]
encaustic, oil and collage on fabric mounted on plywood
107.3 × 153.8 cm
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
Gift of Philip Johnson in honour of Alfred H. Barr, Jr
Accn no. 106.1973
Digital image: © 2010, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In *Flag 1954*, Jasper Johns represents the American flag, not to be nationalistic, but because it is an everyday, familiar object to Americans. It is not flying in glory from a flagpole or carried by a soldier but is a banal object hung on a wall. He seems more interested in the surface and proportions of the flag's pattern (its visual qualities) than the flag as national symbol.

The flag is one of America's most universal icons, yet Johns was amazed to learn how few Americans knew the number of stars and stripes it contained.

CRITICAL STUDY

By changing the context of the flag (showing it in a new environment), Johns made the viewer see it in a new way. It also allowed him freedom to experiment with surface. He used the encaustic method of mixing pigments with hot liquid wax to achieve a sensitive surface texture.

In another work in this series, Johns superimposed three flags of decreasing sizes on top of one another, creating interesting optical effects to reinforce the image. In 1955 he painted *White Flag*, the American flag again, but missing its characteristic red and blue. Was the flag any longer a sign of the United States, or was it instead an artwork, with its subtle shades of white and textural brushstrokes?

DISCUSSION

It has been said that Jasper Johns' main theme in his artmaking was the difference between signs and art. How can you see this in his art?



Painted Bronze II: Ale Cans 1964
painted bronze
13.7 × 20 × 11 cm
Private collection
Photo: Bridgeman Art Library
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

CRITICAL STUDY

In *Painted Bronze* 1960, Johns carries on the tradition of the use of the readymade in art. Marcel Duchamp (1887–1968) first introduced the readymade with *Bicycle Wheel* 1913, consisting of a wheel mounted on a stool. By using selected, normally mass-produced objects, Johns, like Duchamp, attempts to destroy the notion of the uniqueness of the art object. However, *Painted Bronze* is an art object, not just because it is displayed as such, but because it is cast in metal, ensuring that it lasts. The beer can that normally would be easily crushed and disposed of is mounted firmly on a solid base, making of the banal object something monumental and permanent.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Jasper Johns studied at the University of South Carolina then moved to New York to pursue a career as an artist. In 1954 he became a friend of Pop artist Robert Rauschenberg. In the same year he began his series of paintings of the American flag. In 1958 his first one-man exhibition at the famous New York gallery of Leo Castelli was a huge success. His choice of subjects foreshadowed Pop art (page 211). Thus Johns prepared the way for the cultural acceptance of Pop art.

Pop art portrayed aspects and symbols of popular culture that had a powerful impact on contemporary life, presenting them without comment or emotion.

Johns liked to play with imagery that the mind already knows and recognises, painting two-dimensional, commonplace objects such as the American flag in an expressive way using thick, highly textural encaustic paint (pigment mixed with wax). Other subjects were targets, maps, numbers and letters of the alphabet. All are easily recognisable, but his handling of the surface and use of colour raises them above their ordinariness.

From 1961 Johns began to affix real objects to the surface of his canvases. He continued to paint flags, numbers and labels, but his textures were stronger and the brushstrokes more obvious.

POP ART

Pop art explored the image world of popular culture, from which its name derives. Pop artists depicted the mass-produced consumer goods (such as the hamburger, the Coca-Cola can and comic strips) that had assumed cultural importance in the two busiest commercial cities of the world in the two decades following World War II. The visual art movement began in London about 1953 but reached its peak in New York between 1961 and 1965.

After the war the American way of life changed enormously: television (and TV advertising) entered every home, the supermarket replaced the corner store, the washing machine and vacuum cleaner made home life easier, especially for women. Pop artists represented the mass media and mass production with realistic accuracy or through precise simplification. They found their inspiration in advertising, magazines, billboards, movies, comic strips and shop windows. These images were presented with wit, humour and irony. They were both a celebration and a critique of popular culture.

Pop art was generally rendered in an unemotional way, using stark simplicity, repetition and bright colours as devices to attract attention to familiar cultural icons. The development of acrylic paints in the 1950s allowed artists to express the spontaneity and boldness of the modern age. Techniques previously used in commercial advertising, such as billboard murals and silkscreen, became legitimate methods of art production.

At the time, Pop art was very original and even shocking to both the general public and art critics. Later it came to be accepted as a witty reflection of the consumerist culture of the period, the highly pressured, mechanical, superficial way of life promoted by advertising and made possible by mass production and a booming economy.

The style of individual Pop artists differed greatly. British Pop artists tended to work in a more painterly style and used collages from advertising to make cynical comments on consumerism. Pop art influenced and was influenced by advertising, fashion and dress.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 What was your first response to *Flag*? Did you see it as a painting or as the American flag? What is your opinion of the artwork (*Subjective Frame*)?
- 2 Johns does not create his own symbols but uses existing ones. This often precludes decisions regarding composition. How else can we discuss his works within the *Structural Frame*?
- 3 How can we interpret Johns' work within the *Cultural Frame*?
- 4 Painting the American flag was a bold statement in 1950s America. What could be painted as a symbol of Australia in the 2000s?

FURTHER RESEARCH

The art object — *Conceptual Framework*
Look at how Marcel Duchamp and Jasper Johns use the ready-made. Discuss any similarities in approach and how each responds to his society.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Make a sculptural interpretation of an everyday object — for example, your version of a toothbrush, shoe or teapot. (Consider scale and texture as well as an interesting play on media — it could be highly unusual or humorous.) This could be made from cardboard and objects from the recycling company Reverse Garbage.
- 2 Create an etching or linoprint of an everyday object such as a cup and saucer.
- 3 Find and copy a well-known symbol (such as a stop sign or the Woolmark symbol or the logo of a car manufacturer). Make a series experimenting with different surface effects. Exciting effects you could try include:
 - experimenting with wax or gluing on tissue paper before you paint
 - adding rock salt or scrunched-up Gladwrap to ink washes while they are drying.

Andy WARHOL

[1928–1987, American]

FORM

painting (often incorporating silkscreen technique)

eBook plus

INTERVIEW WITH ANDY WARHOL

Use the **Warhol interview** weblink in your eBookPLUS to listen to extracts from a BBC interview with Andy Warhol.

FRAME

Cultural — His subject matter reflects modern America and its focus on big-business consumerism and celebrity. His work has been called a social history of the 1960s to 1980s.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The artwork has been reassessed, now being produced by an assistant using the silkscreen method and photographic processes. The artwork is related to the audience's everyday experiences.



Mick Jagger (set of 10) 1975
From *United States of America 1928/30–1987*
colour screenprint
National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
Purchased 1980
© Andy Warhol
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

CRITICAL STUDY

In *Mick Jagger*, Warhol has created a symbol rather than a realistic portrait of the rock star, emphasising the lips, hair and skinny shoulders, and the sultry look. He had the ability to analyse and distil the key elements of a person, making them instantly identifiable yet glamorised, as they are seen in media images. It is the surface and the iconic image that are important — the artwork itself, not the personality of the subject.

Warhol has purposely overlapped or misaligned the different stencils so that layers of colour are not printed within the outline. Beyond the photograph, Warhol's drawing skills are also displayed. He makes the subjects of his portraits ageless, but even though he glamorises the sitter, it is always distinctly that person.

For his portraits, he often worked from Polaroid snapshots then turned them into multiples. This entailed painting the canvas first then enlarging the Polaroid snapshot, working on the image and making it into an acetate silkscreen. He would often add final touches after it was printed. The actual printing process of producing multiples in different colours was often done by staff at his New York studio (which he called 'The Factory'). The silkscreen process thus removed Warhol from part of the artmaking process.

Warhol's 1970s portraits were more 'painterly', while those of the 1980s were simpler and bolder, with larger blocks of flat colour.



Marilyn 1967

Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
From a portfolio of 10 screenprints
Composition and sheet: 91.5 × 91.5 cm
Publisher: Factory Additions, NY
Printer: Aetna Silkscreen Products, NY.
Edition: 250
Gift of Mr David Whitney
Accn no. 70.1968.6
Scala, Florence
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In line with the 1960s rise of cult stardom, movie star Marilyn Monroe was a perfect subject for Warhol. By emphasising her peroxide blond hair, full lips and eyelids he reinforced the idea of celebrities as constructed commodities. Marilyn Monroe represented the ideals and values of the new media culture of her time, with this image the supreme symbol for western male notions of female sexuality.

Andy Warhol is regarded as the chief protagonist of Pop art. He originally worked as a commercial artist (his drawings of fashion shoes were his most famous illustrations), later applying these techniques in powerful parodies of consumerism and advertising. He was also a film-maker, produced a magazine called *Interview* and was the manager of the famous New York rock band The Velvet Underground.

In his early work Warhol presented the viewer with row upon row of commercial supermarket food items such as Campbells Soup cans or the ever-popular, highly advertised, iconic Coca-Cola bottle. The repetition and lack of a light source meant these works were not traditional still life arrangements; rather, they were a celebration of American consumerism. He sought to both expose and embrace popular culture by depicting images of the mundane, reinterpreting the 'everyday' in paint and thus turning them into 'fine art'. The reality and function of the object have been taken away by its duplication and isolation in space (there is no supporting shelf). Rather, it has become an artwork. We respond by looking at the repetition of the art elements — line, shape and pattern. Warhol created a sense of rhythm and order, but there is no hint of personal involvement or of these objects as the artist's possessions. The objects have become symbols of the modern world. He embraced his society, but in a slightly subversive way, as is hinted at in his series on the electric chair at a time when the debate about capital punishment was constantly in the US media.

CRITICAL STUDY

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

Warhol's interest in consumerism is evident not only in his interpretations of mass-produced items, but also in his artworks of dollar bills. His artmaking methods also reflected society's acceptance of imitations and multiples, questioning the idea of originality and the role of the artist, as he often employed an assistant to screenprint and frame his works (thus selecting the compositions).

Warhol was fascinated by celebrity. He used as his subject matter film stars such as Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth Taylor, Joan Collins and Judy Garland, pop stars such as Elvis Presley, Deborah Harry, Prince, John Lennon and Aretha Franklin, political figures such as Jackie Kennedy and Mao Zedong, and the artists Basquiat, Gilbert and George, Man Ray, Joseph Beuys and Keith Haring. At first, during the sixties, he painted only celebrities and people he knew personally. Believing that everyone could be beautiful and famous (he once famously stated that 'in the future everyone will be famous for 15 minutes'), he idealised his subjects, bringing out their positive features. He often gave his subjects wider eyes or fuller lips and left out wrinkles and double chins. After the first portraits were painted he began working on commissions, in some cases elevating his sitters to celebrity status in the process.

Warhol's art reflected society and pop culture and his own personal interests. His 'celebrity portraits' give us an insight into the glamorous social sets of America and Europe of which he was part until his death in 1987, aged 59. He had desperately wanted to be famous and rich (perhaps a reaction to his poor migrant background), constantly promoting himself and his art, constructing his own image, for example by wearing wigs, hanging out at glamour spots and entertaining celebrities, turning them into icons and giving them back to us as art.

STUDYING ART

- 1 What is your interpretation of this artwork? How do you think your response might differ from that of an audience in 1975?
- 2 What effect does Warhol's use of repetition have?
- 3 How do you think his early training as a graphic artist might have influenced his work?
- 4 Discuss how Warhol's interest in portraiture reflected his culture.
- 5 Andy Warhol said that he wanted to be an Art Businessman or a Business Artist. How did Warhol's approach to artmaking challenge some of the traditions of art?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Look up the design history of the shape of the Coca-Cola bottle to see how both design and art reflect change yet maintain tradition.

ESSAY QUESTION

Evaluate how Warhol and one other artist have responded to their immediate world and life experiences, including popular culture (music, advertising, celebrities, comics, consumerism, films etc.).

ARTMAKING

- 1 Use a photograph of your celebrity or cultural hero and use either the photographic silkscreen technique or a monoprint drawing plus silkscreen or digital manipulation to create artworks suitable for a series of postage stamps to honour this person.
- 2 Choose symbols of Australian consumerism today and arrange them to create an artwork. This could be an effective linoprint or monoprint.
- 3 Take digital photographs of stacks of items in a supermarket; now add humour or a social comment by substituting another product in the stack. Think of an appropriate title and explain the purpose of your artwork. (The Swiss photographer Gabriel Orozco, for example, inserted a can of cat food among tins of green beans and called the artwork *Cat in Jungle* 1992.)
- 4 Create a video representing current youth culture. Consider a voiceover or appropriate soundtrack. This could be a group project.

Roy LICHTENSTEIN

[1923–1997, American]

FORM
painting

FRAMES
Structural, Cultural

eBookplus

INTERVIEW WITH ROY LICHTENSTEIN

Use the **Lichtenstein interview** weblink in your eBookPLUS to watch an interview in which the artist talks about his artistic style, process and artworks.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

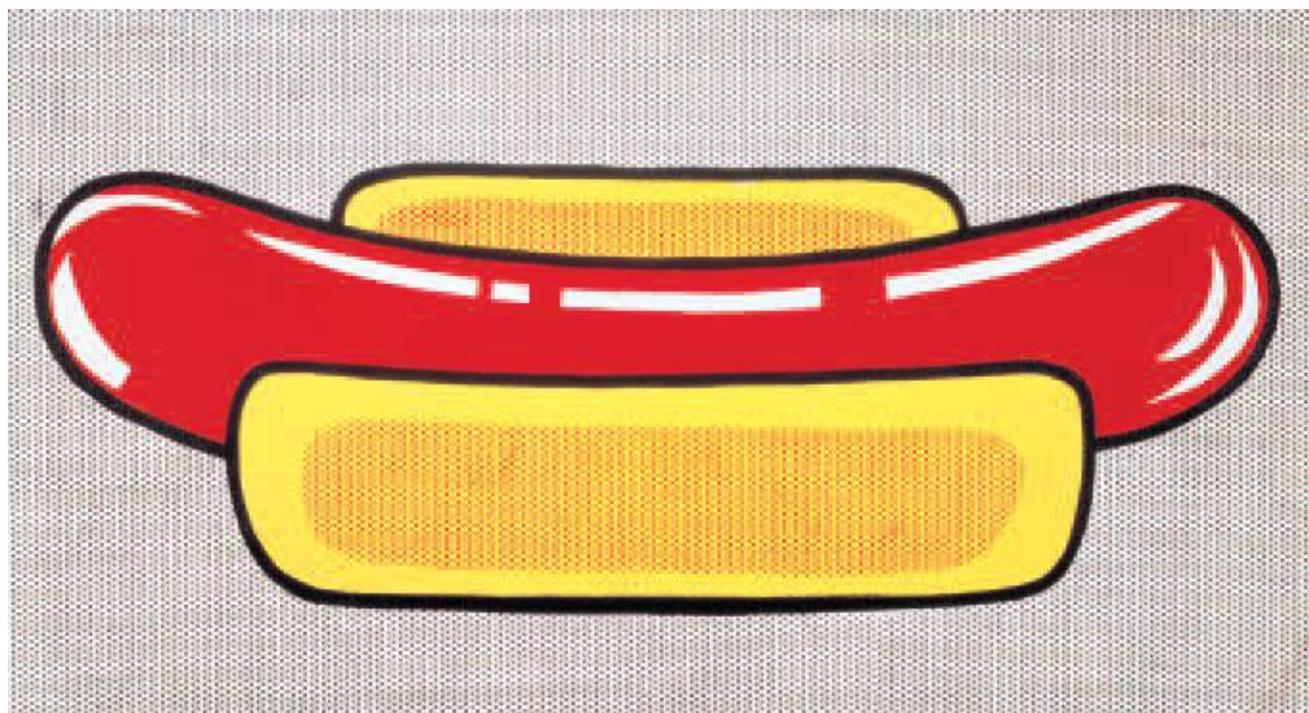
Lichtenstein represents his world using everyday subjects from popular culture. His art reflected the changing times, especially the rise in consumerism, mass production and advertising.

VOCABULARY

stylised greatly simplified according to a set of conventions or a stereotype

symbol a picture sign (such as a hand held up meaning 'stop'); a visual image that stands for a word or meaning

technological reproduction creation of multiple copies by a machine such as a printer or photocopier



Roy Lichtenstein 're-presents', rather than creating something new or unique. He uses a style and process already familiar in a mass media-based consumer society — the comic strip. However, he changes the context. He uses bright, flat colours and bold images with dark outlines. This enormous hot dog is a **symbol** of the commercial attitude of America in general and Americans' love of fast food in particular. It is a reflection of the culture of 1960s America — not only tastes in food and the pace of life, but advances in **technological reproduction**. There is a sense of precision and slickness to this object. The rendering devices of white highlights and black outlines used in cartoons have been applied.

This is a new interpretation of the still life food object, but it is a long way from the realism and solidness of an apple painted by Cezanne, or the lusciousness of a pomegranate by Margaret Olley. It represents the American dependence on mass production and the Pop artist's desire to create art that could be recognised and appreciated by a wide public.

In the Car reflects middle-class life in early 1960s America, a society that had embraced the mass media and modern consumerism. It seems to hint at the perils of such values, while at the same time glorifying them. Lichtenstein

CRITICAL STUDY

Hot Dog 1963

oil on canvas

50.8 × 91.4 cm

© Estate of Roy Lichtenstein, 1963

Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

CRITICAL STUDY



In the Car 1963
Magna on canvas
172 × 203.5 cm
Scottish Gallery of Modern Art,
Edinburgh, UK
© Estate Roy Lichtenstein
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

represents narratives dealing with the emotional extremes of daily life, but in a non-expressive, calculated way.

Once again we see the influence of comics in the close-up frame, simplified graphic style and black outlines. The pattern of the hair, like the fur coat, has been highly **stylised**. The couple appear as the idealised, glamorous and beautiful blond heroine and strong and handsome dark hero. Particularly evident in the faces is his method of using tiny circles to carefully reproduce the dots associated with silkscreen printing — the Benday dots of newspaper and comic strips at the time that made gradations of colour possible.

Colour is restricted, referencing the way commercial printers often saved on extra colour printing. As a painter, of course, Lichtenstein had no such restrictions.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Roy Lichtenstein is a notable figure in the art movement that came to be labelled Pop art. His subjects in the early 1960s were drawn from popular culture, in particular comic strips, and mainly concerned war, romance and detectives. His images were frequently taken from the mass media — newspapers, television and other mass communications. In 1961 he began using cartoon images and techniques derived from commercial art. Lichtenstein's works were painstakingly hand-painted to look as though they had been created using commercial reproduction techniques. His solid colour, flat pattern and stylised images resemble comics.

The main difference between Lichtenstein's work and comics is his huge scale. Although Lichtenstein has said he wanted his images to look as machine made as

possible, his approach to composition and balance of colour and pattern is that of a painter. He deliberately eliminated certain parts of the text and images of his original sources. They are not copies of comics but transformations of them into art. He simplifies and strengthens the image by using fewer, more definite shapes and colours. He wrote, 'All my art is in some way about other art, even if the other art is cartoons'.

Lichtenstein was concerned with finding an art that dealt with colour and composition and the sense of balance that the abstract artists had achieved, but he wanted to include an image or subject. Between 1962 and 1964 Lichtenstein began interpreting artworks by Cézanne, Mondrian and Picasso. These were early instances of appropriation, a Postmodern technique of copying images from past art but changing them subtly to alter their meaning.

In 1965 Lichtenstein produced large-scale paintings of brushstrokes, still in his commercial, controlled art style of simplified shapes, dot infill pattern and black cartoon outline. They are a humorous comment on the free brushstrokes of the earlier art style Abstract Expressionism.

Although his work is generally termed Pop art because of his celebration of everyday subject matter and references to consumerism and mass media, Lichtenstein's works have an ironic sense of humour and the suggestion that he is actually challenging the viewer to consider the social implications of his paintings. For Lichtenstein, copying an image from another source, such as a comic book, seems to be not just a new art technique but an intellectual exercise that involved a distancing of the artist from his subject matter. Lichtenstein adds tension and at times wit.

What is unique about his comments on American society is that his images are essentially unemotional. He does not judge his subjects or society, even though he may have had his own opinions. Lichtenstein enjoyed showing the familiarity of the tasteless and commercial in a strange way, encouraging the audience to recognise that the banal (ordinary, overfamiliar) had a place in 'high art'. In many ways Lichtenstein was responsible for a re-evaluation of what is termed art.

Artist's statement

'... signs and comic strips are interesting as subject matter. There are certain things that are usable, forceful, and vital about commercial art. We're using those things — but we are not really advocating stupidity, international teenagerism, and terrorism . . .'

Quoted in Janis Hendrickson, Roy Lichtenstein, Taschen Verlag, 1996

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Create your own cartoon speech balloons to suit the couple in *In the Car*.
- 2 What are some of the differences between Lichtenstein's artworks and comics of your own experience?
- 3 Write two critical reviews of Lichtenstein's work — the first one as a critic writing for an art journal at the time Lichtenstein's work was first exhibited; the second one as a newspaper critic 10 years later, when his work was fully accepted by both the public and the artworld.
- 4 What do you learn about American culture in the 1960s by looking at and reading about Lichtenstein's paintings?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Research the work of one other American Pop artist. Explain how the artist broke with some of the traditions of what an artist is and how an artwork should be created. Consider:

- originality
- new media
- new techniques.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create your own artwork that includes food as a symbol of your cultural background.
- 2 Create an artwork in a medium of your choice that has as its imagery mass-produced, everyday objects (e.g. iPods or soccer balls) to represent your society, then complete a PMI evaluation in your Process Diary.
- 3 Create a three-part narrative of an event. You do not need to use a comic strip format, although this may be an influence.

Auguste RODIN

(1840–1917, French)

FORM

sculpture

FRAME

Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Rodin observed and expressed the world of humanity. He created timeless artworks that explored human emotions and actions.

eBookplus

RODIN SCULPTURES

Use the **Rodin** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore an online gallery of sculptures by this artist.



The Thinker 1884

bronze

71.4 × 59.9 × 42.4 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Felton Bequest, 1921

CRITICAL STUDY

Rodin rarely represented complete repose or relaxation. Even in *The Thinker* we are aware of inner turmoil. This figure conveys a sense of vigorous life, of concentrated power, created through its posture and the emphasis on certain muscles. To Rodin, art was the expression of life. He used modelling and textures to create a play of light across the surfaces.

Sculpted in the round, *The Thinker* was originally designed by Rodin to be situated above the writhing figures of the damned in his project *The Gates of Hell*. This figure seems to be pondering their fate.

Rodin was an outstanding French sculptor of the nineteenth century, known for the individual expression and lifelike character of his sculptures. He was the first sculptor to break the conventions imposed by the art academies that controlled art learning and exhibitions. Academic art was posed and unemotional, with a sleek finish. Rodin preferred his models to walk around the studio freely so he could observe their natural movements and gestures. Rodin wanted to reveal humanity. He worked from his many sketches of the models and from photographs. His work is also unique in the way he showed the character of the medium — the lumpiness of clay, which was then cast in bronze, and the lustre of marble.

Rodin's work varies from sweetly sentimental to expressionistic (revealing strong emotions) to monumental (on a grand scale). At all times the human form is his main subject. It is not idealised — he did not try to represent perfection — but it has a force and vitality. Rodin humanised the figure, giving it natural movement, real emotions and a sense of being casually observed rather than posed. At the height of his career he employed more than fifty assistants (not just apprentices), from clay moulders to marble carvers.

At times Rodin worked with the whole figure, as in *The Thinker*, but other works concentrated on body parts that revealed a particular movement or emotion. His work *Cathedral* shows only two hands that suggest prayer. *The Scream* and *The Sorrow* are heads with mouths wide open in agony and fear. Rodin stated: 'even in those works where action is least emphasised, I have sought to put some gesture'.

The Thinker was intended to occupy the summit of *The Gates of Hell* and was designed to represent the poet Dante (*The Divine Comedy*) meditating on his creation, although it came to represent humanity in general. *The Gates of Hell* included many figures in varying poses. Rodin worked on the project for 40 years, but the figures remained unfinished at his death.

Rodin's intention in this work was to create a universe or panorama of the passions and sentiments of humanity. We can see the influence of Renaissance sculpture, in particular that of Michelangelo. Rodin uses the human form to express emotions and actions.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

- 1 Outline your feelings and opinion of this sculpture in the form of a critical review suitable for a newspaper article announcing its new position in the Art Gallery of New South Wales (*Subjective Frame*).
- 2 Discuss Rodin's sculptural technique (*Structural Frame* — artist's practice).
- 3 Is this sculpture a reflection of life in 1900 or is it still relevant today? Give reasons for your answer (*Cultural and Postmodern Frames*).
- 4 Postmodern writers often question past ideas about artists and their originality. Rodin employed many assistants. His favourite mistress, Camille Claudel, is said to have sculpted the feet and hands of his famous work *Burghers of Calais*. How does this information throw into question the idea of Rodin as an artistic genius?

Historical study

- 5 How is Rodin's work different from earlier work from the art academies?
- 6 What sculptor in particular influenced Rodin?

FURTHER RESEARCH

- 1 Rodin's *Balzac* and *Victor Hugo* were official commissions, but they were not well received by the public and generated critical debate. Why do you think they were not given excellent critical reviews at the time?
- 2 Ghiberti, a Renaissance sculptor, also created a work called *Gates of Paradise*. In 400 words, make a comparison with Rodin's work of the same name. How do they differ in technique and composition?

ARTMAKING

- 1 Mould clay or carve plaster to form a part of the human figure to show strong emotion. Pay particular attention to the surface and muscles to express emotion. It could be exciting to combine this with a video to create an installation (*Subjective Frame*).
- 2 Research sculptures by Rodin (www.musee-rodin.fr). Draw them in charcoal, observing muscles and the play of light on the figures. These could be overlapped to form a dramatic figure composition.

Constantin BRANCUSI

[1876–1957, Romanian]

FORM

sculpture

FRAME

Structural

eBookplus

BRANCUSI: LIFE AND WORKS

Use the **Brancusi weblink** in your eBookPLUS to explore the life and works of artist Constantin Brancusi.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Brancusi responded to nature, the abstract ideals of **Modernism** and the shiny perfection of the mechanised world. The viewer admires his objects' refined simplicity and responds to them as symbols of an idea.

VOCABULARY

Modernism art movement of the twentieth century that made a self-conscious break with art traditions through styles such as Cubism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism and Surrealism

organic based on natural forms or shapes



The Kiss 1907

stone

28 × 26 × 21.5 cm

© Constantin Brancusi

Photo: Christie's Images/Corbis

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CRITICAL STUDY

In *The Kiss* we are witnessing a personal experience. However, rather than portraying it as an emotional moment, Brancusi interprets it as a universal symbol of love, the joining of two people. The mood is one of restraint, a holding-back of emotion.

There is extreme simplification to the point of utmost purity and abstraction. All unnecessary detail is eliminated (removed). Carving is minimal and the original shape of the block of stone is still evident. *The Kiss* displays Brancusi's imaginative powers and observational skills. He allows the texture of the stone to speak for itself — it does not try to imitate flesh. The hair is stylised, a different pattern representing each sex. Only the basic elements of eyes and lips are shown and these appear joined as one.



Bird in Space c. 1931–36
 white marble, limestone 'collar',
 sandstone base
 318.1 × 42.5 × 42.5 cm
 black marble, white marble 'collar',
 sandstone base
 328.4 × 51.4 × 51.4 cm
 National Gallery of Australia, Canberra
 Purchased 1973
 © Constantin Brancusi
 Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

Two versions of *Bird in Space* — one in white marble, one in black — form part of the series that includes the famous bronze version.

Brancusi developed a method of extreme simplification and respect for his media. This often led to controversy. In the mid 1920s the US Customs Service refused to allow his now-famous sculpture into the country duty free as a work of art. Customs maintained that it was taxable because it was simply a piece of metal, yet it was actually a beautiful, abstract symbol of a bird in flight. It has a smooth, highly polished, reflective surface and a shape suggestive of a feather or the blade of a plane's propeller.

Brancusi was the son of poor Romanian peasants. He trained at a craft school then studied sculpture at Bucharest. He settled in Paris in 1904.

Brancusi is considered one of the pioneers of modern sculpture. He led the way for a generation of artists who were trying to free themselves from the tradition of realistic representation. He was interested in the pure ideal form, the essence of a face or animal.

Brancusi was revolutionary in capturing the essence of such universal themes as love, as seen in *The Kiss*. He also expressed birth through his variations on the symbol of the egg and created many representations of nature, such as the seal,

CRITICAL STUDY

HISTORICAL STUDY

fish and birds. His objects relate to a subject and are recognisable, but also exist, and can be appreciated in their own right, as abstract shapes. He is sometimes referred to as an **organic** sculptor because of his concentration on abstracted natural forms. He developed his own unique visual language in sculptural form. The viewer admires their aesthetic appeal, the purity of form and surface, and responds to the associations they suggest.

Brancusi worked in a variety of media with precision and an emphasis on the importance of presentation. For example, he generally designed a base or pedestal of contrasting material or shape to highlight and elevate the simplicity of the artwork. At all times he allowed the natural beauty of the material to show. His bronze and marble works were highly polished, creating exquisite objects. In *The Kiss*, he used the texture of the stone to act as a contrast to the simple shape. It is one of several sculptures he did on this theme.

Like the modern painters Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian (page 206) and Mark Rothko, Brancusi saw his artworks as objects of contemplation. Brancusi said of his sculptures: 'Don't look for obscure formulas or mysteries. It's pure joy I'm giving you'.

STUDYING ART

Critical study

1 *Subjective Frame*

What are your personal feelings and opinions about this sculpture?

2 *Structural Frame*

Does this kiss seem a casual, fleeting event or has Brancusi suggested a deeper bond between the two figures? If so, how?

Historical study

3 What was unique and new about

Brancusi's sculptures? Why is he such a significant artist?

4 Art historical writers often compare artists in order to show their place within a period or style or to show their significance to art history. Which artists have been compared with Brancusi?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Critical writing

1 Write a critical review of two of Brancusi's works on a particular theme, such as creation (*The New Born* 1915 and *Sculpture for the Blind* 1924) or the head (*Sleeping Muse* 1910 and *The Muse* 1912). Write either from the *Structural Frame*, concentrating on his use of symbols, techniques and media, or from the *Subjective Frame*, responding in a personal way to his imaginative response to themes and the meanings and associations they suggest to you.

2 Write a one-page essay comparing Brancusi's sculpture with a modern painter who worked with abstraction. (You might consider one of the following artists: Kandinsky, Klee, Miró, Mondrian, Malevitch, Rothko.)

3 Compare and contrast Brancusi's sculptural interpretation of a kiss with that of the French sculptor Auguste Rodin (page 218). Consider the frame of the artist's work and the historical context.

ARTMAKING

1 Create your own sculptural interpretation of 'flight' in a medium of your choice. (For ideas you might look at Leonardo da Vinci's drawings on the study of flight.)

2 Brancusi creates a symbol for love and the close connection of two people in his work *The Kiss*. Try devising a symbol for the opposite concept — hatred and conflict. This could be developed into a sculptural piece showing tension or into a series of drawings.

FORMS

sculpture, painting, drawing

FRAME

Subjective

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is a close relationship between the artist and the subject of his artworks, which have an emotional impact on the audience.

VOCABULARY

elongated stretched, distended, made thinner and longer

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GIACOMETTI CHRONOLOGY

Use the **Giacometti** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a chronology of the life and works of artist Alberto Giacometti.



The sculpture is familiar — we recognise figures walking in a street — yet it is also curious in its suggestion of immobility and profound solitude. The figures are close to one another yet the space between them, rather than uniting them, creates a sense of isolation, as each walks in a different direction. It appears as an image of the modern, busy world, of cities where the importance of individual and personal communication has been lost.

CRITICAL STUDY

Giacometti has reduced the human figure to a simple **elongated** expression. His slender, fragile figures appear eroded by time, their ‘skin’ scarred and pitted. His figures are linear forms without the mass we usually associate with sculptural figures. They reach out or stride, reacting to the space around them, in what is called in sculptural terms ‘an open composition’.

La Place (City Square) 1948

bronze
21.6 × 64.5 × 43.8 cm
Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York
Accn no. 337.1949
Digital image: © 2010, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

In his drawings and paintings Giacometti tried to convey not only the appearance of the model but what they felt, what their visual sensation was. He suggests emotions to the viewer, encouraging you to interpret the mood according to your own personal experience.

Diego (page 224) is a study of his brother, who, along with his wife Annette, was one of his main models — perhaps because they had the patience to sit for his many studies. A seated figure stares straight ahead within a bare room, which has the suggestion of a frame around it. This is typical of Giacometti’s style. Although done in a painting medium, it is handled like a drawing, relying on free-flowing, expressive lines and tone. The spidery line work creates a rich surface texture

CRITICAL STUDY

Diego 1953
oil on canvas
100.5 × 80.5 cm
Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum,
New York
Accn no. 55.1431
Photo: David Heald/The Solomon R.
Guggenheim Foundation, New York
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



so that the figure almost fades into the background. The brushstrokes are thick but indistinct, applied in layers, alternating between black and white, over the background washes of shades of grey. The use of neutrals and sketchy approach create a sense of anxiety.

HISTORICAL STUDY

Giacometti was a Modernist sculptor, draughtsman, painter and poet. He was consumed with the imagery of heads and figures, and addicted to drawing. Giacometti saw art as a means of communicating to others what he saw. He wanted his artworks to reveal his memories and feelings. His obsession with mortality began when he was 20, following the death of an older companion.

Giacometti's figures seem to be threatened by the idea of solitude. The typically gaunt frames, wiry bodies and knobbly skin exist in immensities of space. Even though his figures are often shown in action, such as his *Man Pointing* and *Walking Man*, they are almost shadows, creating a sense of vulnerability rather than forceful movement. His figures exist, yet, according to the Existentialist philosophy, they lack life. Perhaps it was Giacometti's friendship with the French

philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre that led him to seek answers to the great questions of humanity. The Existentialists believed that only you are responsible for your own existence or essence, your meaning or significance in the world. In Existentialist philosophy, which gained currency after World War II, the only certainty is death. Giacometti's work is thus a reaction to postwar social conditions, the questions and void left by the terrible experiences of the war, such as the concentration camps and the atomic bombs.

Giacometti came to believe that the main difference between a living person and a corpse was the gaze. His works seem to ask, 'What does it mean to look, to suffer, to live?' The eyes of his heads are disturbing — they seem to search for eternity, as if he is trying to show the essence of being, to question what it is to be alive.

Through his art, Giacometti seems to be trying to reach the inner soul hidden under the appearance of the physical body, to discover the secret hurt in every being. His figures appear haunted by sorrow, yet are deeply fascinating.

Giacometti copied past artworks, such as Van Gogh portraits, in his quest to understand art and the essence of human life. The artist whom he admired most was the Venetian mannerist painter Tintoretto. Whenever he visited Venice he would study Tintoretto's works.

He was always drawing: if he had no drawing paper, he would resort to pieces of newspaper; failing that, he would draw with his finger on the table. Drawing was vital to him. He felt that if you could draw, you could paint or sculpt — it was the beginning.

Giacometti's sculptures are mainly cast in bronze, but his preliminary work included using clay on a wire armature. He kept these moist with damp cloths while working on them. When using plaster, he would hack into the surface with a type of cleaver when it was not quite hard, constantly reworking the surface. His brother Diego would remove many of Alberto's works-in-progress and cast them, in case Alberto were to destroy them, since he never seemed to be satisfied that a work was finished.

Artist's statement

'... to get a grip on reality, to defend myself, to move forward as far as possible in every direction ... to be as free and mighty as possible, to be completely and utterly committed ... to plunge in, take risks, discover new worlds, fight my own battles ... for fun, for pleasure ...'

ARTIST'S PRACTICE

On the reasons for his obsession with drawing, quoted from the film *Albert Giacometti, 1966*, by Ernst Scheidegger and Peter Munger

STUDYING ART

- 1 What similarities can you see between Giacometti's painting and his sculpture?
- 2 Analyse how Giacometti uses space to create mood and meaning. (Consider the composition of the painting. What is the relationship between the figure and the background?)
- 3 These are some words that have been used to describe Giacometti's artworks: *strange, confronting, nervous, skeletal, tension, enclosed, expressive, exaggerated, compressed*. Choose three of these words to write your own interpretation of his approach to artmaking.

ESSAY QUESTION

Giacometti creates in sculptural form a similar sense of loneliness and the fragility of life as conveyed in the paintings and prints of Edvard Munch (page 10). Discuss, referring to particular examples.

ARTMAKING

- 1 Create your own expressive head in clay. Remember to hollow it out when the clay has stiffened, or use a wire armature and add plaster to build up a textured surface that can be carved into when almost set.
- 2 Do a tonal drawing of a seated person in a room to create a feeling of tension or loneliness. You could work in charcoal and white and grey pastel or oil stick. You might consider a neutral colour wash as a starting point for the background. Do preliminary sketches in your Process Diary to determine the position of the figure and the scale of the room to give maximum emotional impact.

CHAPTER 9

MODERN ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN (1880–)

LIST OF ARTISTS

Architecture and furniture design

Frank Lloyd Wright p. 227

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe p.230

Le Corbusier p. 233

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INTERACTIVITY: VOCABULARY BUILDER

Familiarise yourself with some of the key terms used within this chapter to help expand your art vocabulary.

SEARCHLIGHT ID: INT-2194

Architecture

Modern architects turned away from historical references and conventions, discarding unnecessary detail and decoration, instead concentrating on function and a respect for materials. They were influenced by developments in science and machinery and the changed modes of living that accompanied the growth of cities. New methods of construction such as steel skeletons, glass for large areas of wall space and reinforced concrete allowed for a new, streamlined approach to architecture and opened up new opportunities for creative expression using form.

Design

Design is a meaningful embodiment of the society that generates it. Designed objects reflect a society, just as any artwork does.

The designer needs an understanding of the interrelationship of people and product. Function relates to the compatibility of the product with the user — compatibility not just on the physical or ergonomic level, but also of style and taste.

The designer starts with an idea or problem to solve; how the work turns out has to do with the way the problem is stated. One of the things the designer learns quickly is that in problem solving the limitations are far more important than the freedoms. To ascertain the limitations of a product, a great deal of information is needed, such as on production methods — tooling required, materials used and production runs (the number of objects to be made).

Markets and marketing can also affect design. For innovative works, who is the target audience? Who is likely to accept change? How do you cater to their tastes? Surveys are carried out to identify, and discover the characteristics of, the potential buyer.

Technological developments have greatly expanded the scope of the designer's work and the speed with which it occurs. The design process includes important collaborations all the way down the line — with materials people, engineers, technicians in specialised areas and marketing people.

Traditionally the designer and maker were one. One of the impacts of the Industrial Revolution was the separation, in time and space, of the act of design from the act of production. Today there is a fundamental relationship between scientific and technological research and the role of the designer. Unlike the artisans' workshops of the past, no single person is likely to have a complete grasp of every aspect of the design process.



Le Corbusier

Notre Dame du Haut 1950–55

Ronchamp, Haute Saone, France

Photo: Hervé Hughes/Hemis/Corbis

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Frank Lloyd WRIGHT

[1867–1959, American]

FRAME

Structural in his concern for materials and unity of design

eBookplus

WRIGHT'S LIFE AND WORK

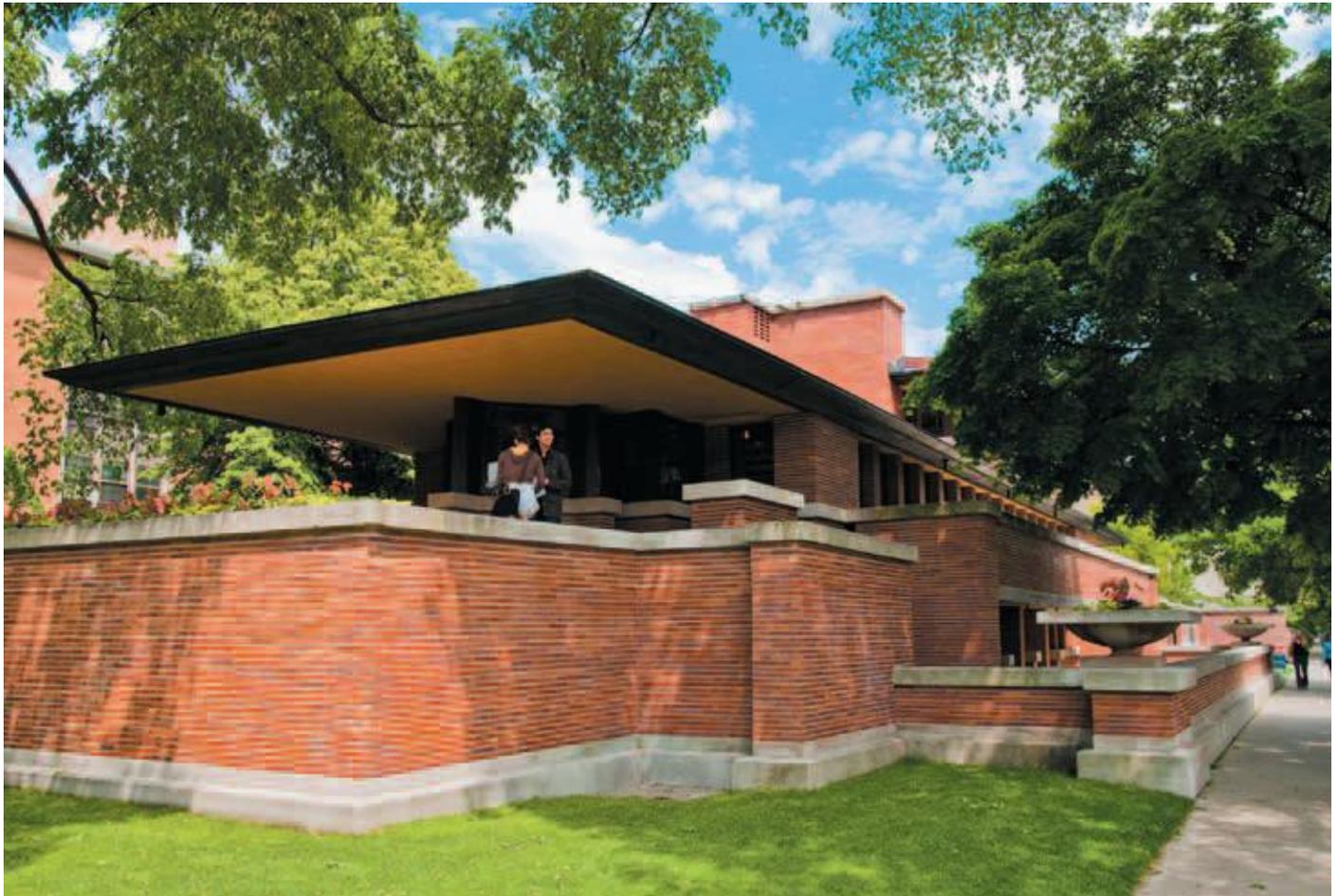
Use the **Frank Lloyd Wright** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and work of this architect.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Wright's houses were generally designed for particular individual clients and to reflect the surrounding landscape.

VOCABULARY

articulated clearly expressed; also segments put together using joints
cantilevering projecting a rigid structure so that it juts out well beyond its vertical support
reinforced concrete concrete that has been strengthened with steel rods or mesh



Robie House is an example of what came to be known as Frank Lloyd Wright's 'prairie house'. These houses are characterised by a horizontal emphasis to relate to the horizon, a flowing plan **articulated** around a central fireplace and chimney, wide overhanging roof areas with ribbon windows that extend around corners. The building is in harmony with its natural environment. It is spatially innovative yet solid in appearance. Wright's houses are asymmetrical in feel and generally use local stone. There is a flow from outside to interior spaces.

CRITICAL STUDY

Frederick C. Robie House 1908–10
Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois, USA
Photo: Bob Krist/Corbis
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The prairie houses seem to grow out of the ground rather than sit on top of it. They are individual and exciting in their design. The main living spaces are arranged on the raised first floor, with a verandah providing privacy and an open aspect to the house. The bedrooms take advantage of available space by being tucked under the low-pitched roof. Coloured glass, wood panelling and leadlights are the main decorative features, providing a sense of rich yet restrained ornamentation (as shown on page 228).



Interior view of Frederick C. Robie House
 1908–10
 Hyde Park, Chicago, Illinois, USA
 Photo: Thomas A. Heinz/Corbis
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CRITICAL STUDY

Fallingwater (opposite) blends with the site not only through its form, with the overhanging, jutting-out slabs echoing the cliff below, but through the use of local materials so the vertical members match the rocky surface in colour and texture. It is a harmonious building in sympathy with its surroundings, the waterfall seeming to flow from the structure itself. Despite its three storeys there is a horizontal emphasis. This dramatic and daring building used the new construction method of **cantilevering** using **reinforced concrete**.

CRITICAL STUDY

In Wright's 'Barrel Chair', the design emphasis is on the simple curved shape with the detailing reduced to the pattern created by slits in the wood. It is a move away from traditional square wooden chairs embellished with turned legs and decorative carving, but it retains a sense of warmth through the use of natural wood and fabric. By contrast, Mies van der Rohe's chair on page 231 and Le Corbusier's on page 235 were influenced by the Bauhaus design school, which tended to use the newer material of chrome combined with slick leather.

ARCHITECT'S PRACTICE

Frank Lloyd Wright wanted to create architecture that blended into the surrounding environment — that, as he put it, graced its environment rather than disgraced it. For this reason, and for the fact that he considered his designs in their totality, designing fittings and furniture as a single 'organism', he has been called an organic architect. He believed in the free flow of internal space, removing all walls that were not necessary for privacy. With privacy in mind, he included rows of windows extending around corners of rooms but placed close to the ceiling, allowing light to enter without the need for curtains. He used



Fallingwater 1939
Mill Run, Pennsylvania, USA
Photo: Laura Farr/Getty Images
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

eBookplus **FRANK LLOYD
WRIGHT 3D**

Use the **Frank Lloyd Wright 3D** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore three-dimensional models of many of Wright's buildings.

Barrel Chair 1904–05
Copeland Furniture
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



Frank Lloyd WRIGHT

modern construction methods and innovative designs in his houses, breaking away from the box shape with a window in the centre of each wall. His interiors feature rich wood panelling, beamed ceilings and tiled fireplaces, his attention to detail creating a warmth and sense of elegance. Each house is uniquely designed to suit its purpose and site, and for each he also designed the furniture and fittings so there was a sense of unity.

Although Wright mainly designed domestic buildings for the growing middle class of suburban America, his unique Guggenheim Museum, in New York, has become an icon for Modernism as well as for the city. The outside flowing, curving shape is echoed by the internal spiraling ramp that provides and leads to the exhibition spaces.

STUDYING ARCHITECTURE

- 1 What were some of Wright's new approaches to domestic design?
- 2 What new building materials did he use?
- 3 How did Wright make his buildings blend in with the surrounding environment?

Ludwig Mies VAN DER ROHE

(1886–1969, German)

FRAME

Structural in its emphasis on rational design. Concrete, iron and glass were established as the modern building materials. Van der Rohe added refined areas of marble, chrome and smoky glass, their contrasting surfaces becoming a main element of the design.

eBookplus

VAN DER ROHE BUILDINGS

Use the **Van der Rohe buildings** weblink in your eBookPLUS to explore a gallery of buildings by this architect.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The emphasis of the design is on suiting the purpose and consideration of materials. Through the use of large areas of glass, the buildings merge into the surrounding areas.

VOCABULARY

aesthetics branch of philosophy dealing with the expression of beauty

Barcelona Pavilion 1929

Barcelona, Spain

Photo: Quim Llenas/Cover/Getty Images

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CRITICAL STUDY

This exhibition building was the German Pavilion designed for the International Exposition in 1929 in the Spanish city of Barcelona.

Although small, the building demonstrates many of van der Rohe's innovative design characteristics. It epitomises his concern for purity and clarity and his striving for perfection in proportions and finish. It demonstrates a very rational approach to architecture. It also illustrates his 'honest' expression of structure and materials, his approach of reducing building design to its absolute basics — a flat roof, supporting columns or beams and wall dividers. Both ends of the roof slabs of the pavilion are cantilevered beyond the pillars and wall areas, the roof appearing to float above the ground. Glass screens contrast with the more solid, textured marble sections of walls. The building is mirrored in two pools of water, while interior and exterior areas are linked by large areas of glass. The way van der Rohe subtly articulates space, and the refinement of the contrasting surfaces, creates the overall excitement and sense of elegance.

Originally designed for the German Pavilion at the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona, the Barcelona chair has become an icon of furniture design. It is exciting in shape, perfectly proportioned, modern and simple in lines, yet extremely comfortable and suitable to a variety of interiors. It has retained its purity and elegance, and remains a staple in tasteful executive offices and contemporary, interior-designed houses.

CRITICAL STUDY



The Seagram Building, a 38-storey bronze and grey glass skyscraper designed in association with Philip Johnson, has become a symbol of modern architecture. It stands facing a granite-paved plaza bordered by a marble parapet. Included in the symmetrical design are two rectangular pools. The plaza is elevated and the building is raised on stilts. The tower itself is set back some distance from the street, emphasising its strong verticality. Van der Rohe distinctly separates the supporting elements (its structure), from the enclosing ones, creating a glass

CRITICAL STUDY



'Barcelona' Chair 1929
stainless steel bars; leather-upholstered cushions
74.6 × 74.3 × 75.5 cm; seat height, 44.2 cm
Manufacturer: Knoll, © 2010
Digital image: © 2010, The Museum of Modern Art, New York/Scala, Florence
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

Seagram Building 1958
Park Avenue, New York, USA
Photo: Barry Winiker/Photolibrary
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

'curtain wall'. Thus the floor levels and supports are evident from the outside. It is a building of subtle, subdued colouring, beauty of materials and precise attention to detail, resulting in a sense of elegance and pure design.

This formula of using a skeletal structure with steel construction and extensive glazed (glass) facades (outer walls) in high-rise buildings is repeated in his residential complex Lake Shore Apartments, Chicago.

HISTORICAL STUDY

German-born architect Mies van der Rohe is renowned for his concern with marrying **aesthetics** with advances in technology — for combining metal and glass in apparently simple ways to produce a sense of refinement and purity of design.

When the avant-garde Bauhaus design school in Weimar, Germany, where he was working, closed in 1933 van der Rohe had to seek alternative avenues for his progressive theories on modern design. America, with its booming postwar economy, gave him a fresh start and an opportunity to work on large-scale projects.

With his purist approach to design and interest in clear-cut lines, Mies van der Rohe is considered the founder of the International Style (its overriding theory being 'fitness for purpose'), which was prominent in Europe and the United States in the 1930s and 1940s. Although his radical approach of clean-lined, glass-walled skyscrapers with perfectly proportioned grids was originally exciting, it was embraced so widely that a certain repetitive monotony became the Modernist hallmark of several American cities.

STUDYING ARCHITECTURE

- 1 Explain the modern architectural concept of 'curtain walling'.
- 2 Give three characteristics of Mies van der Rohe's design style.
- 3 What similarities can you see in van der Rohe's approach to design and Piet Mondrian's approach to painting (see page 206)?

ARTMAKING

Design your 'dream house' using van der Rohe's principle of 'less is more' and his concern for simplicity, perfection of proportion and detailing taking into consideration new technologies, multi-purpose spaces and the rising costs and lack of space in our cities and suburbs.

Le CORBUSIER (born Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, 1887–1965, Swiss-French)

FRAME

Subjective in their sculptural shapes; *Structural* in their rationality

eBookplus

FONDATION LE CORBUSIER

Use the **Fondation Le Corbusier** weblink in your eBookPLUS to discover more about the life and work of this architect.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

His designs did not attempt to relate the structures to their surroundings.



Le Corbusier maintained that a building need not relate to its natural surroundings, but could be an isolated unit in its own right. His main considerations were:

CRITICAL STUDY

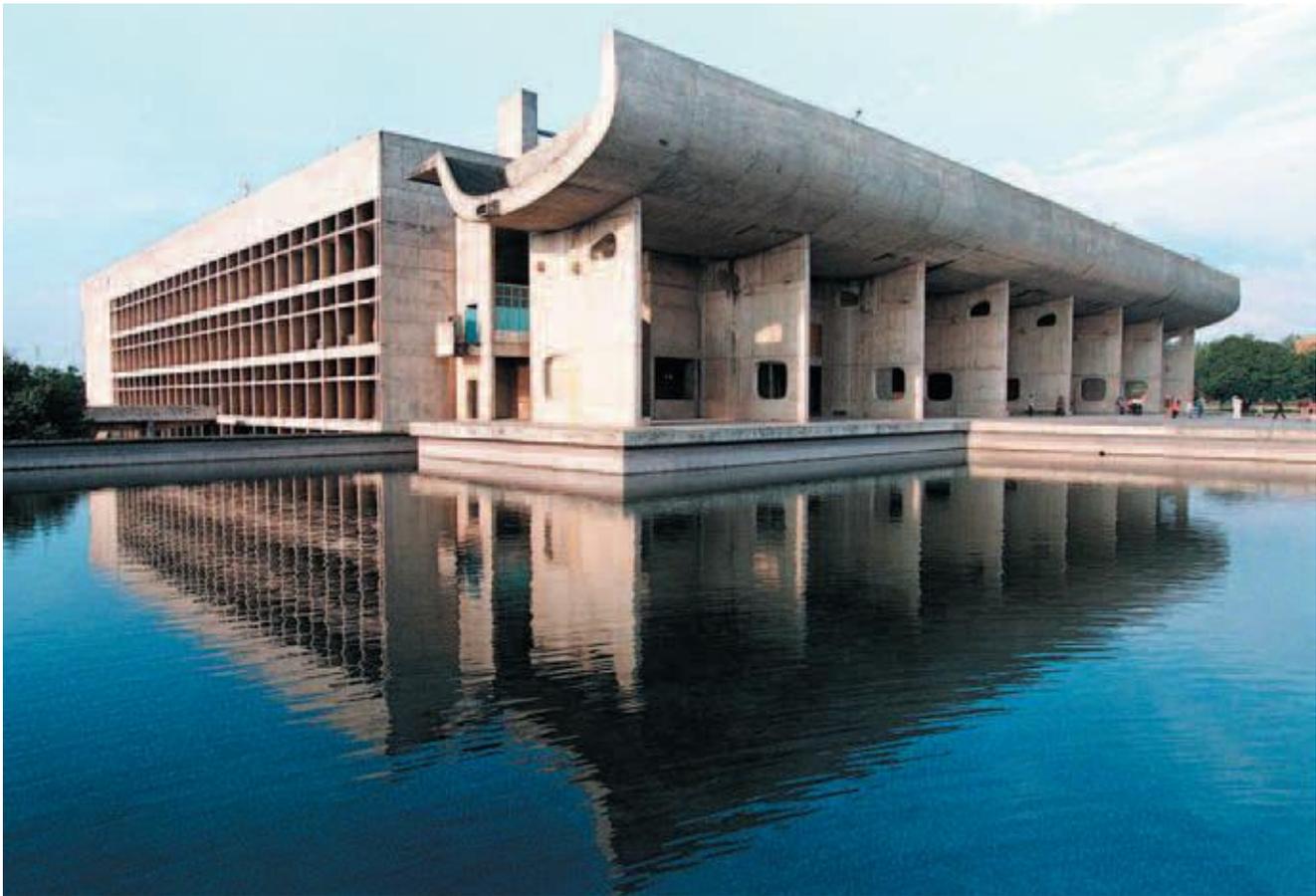
- pilotis (thin support columns) to lift the house off the ground
- a free plan allowing interior space to be organised as desired
- non-load-bearing external walls to allow for interesting intervals of windows or openings
- the 'ribbon' window (a long, horizontal band of linked windows to let in light)
- a roof garden (or open terrace garden, as is the case here) to replace the ground covered by the house.

The white exterior contrasts with the rich colours used in the interior. The Villa Savoye is an icon of Le Corbusier's pure approach to architecture and his mission to perfect a coexistence between man, machine and nature. It is sophisticated, abstract and classic.

The Villa Savoye 1928–29
Poissy, Ile-de-France, France
Photo: Adrian Forty, 2002,
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The High Court at Chandigarh, with its reflecting pool, is one of the parliamentary buildings designed for the new capital city of the Indian state of Punjab. It is constructed of rough textured concrete, satisfying climatic considerations through the use of sunbreaks and deeply recessed irregular windows to create welcome shade. All essential services and amenities were addressed in Le Corbusier's civic designs.

CRITICAL STUDY



Chandigarh Legislative Assembly (High Court, Palace of Justice) 1951–56

Chandigarh, India

Photo: John Macdougall/AFP

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DEBATE

Chandigarh, India's first planned city, was largely designed by Le Corbusier. Based on initial plans drawn up by the architects Albert Mayer and Matthew Nowicki, Le Corbusier's designs took into consideration social services, community use and the main parliamentary buildings. It was not as successful as expected. Using a suitable internet search engine, look up the early history of Canberra to find out how the public responded (accepted or rejected) proposals for Australia's new planned capital. Working in groups, consider what you feel are the essentials and ideals of a capital city. Conduct a class debate on designs for new cities versus cities that grow naturally over time.

CRITICAL STUDY

Notre Dame du Haut was designed for about 200 worshippers, but also to cater for the pilgrims who visit twice a year, thus the additions of an exterior choir in front of the east wall, sheltered by the sweeping projecting roof. It represented a new approach to design. The surging sculptural forms of the upward sweep of the roof contrast with the solid shape of the adjacent bell tower. The positioning of the windows is far from traditional: they seem to be randomly placed in the walls to create a sense of rhythm. The influence of Le Corbusier's experience as a painter and sculptor is evident in his playful approach to this building's design. The windows of various sizes set in the thick walls seem to open towards the interior, producing a glow of light and colour similar to the spiritual feel created by Gothic stained glass windows.

CRITICAL STUDY

Le Corbusier designed the Grand Comfort Chair with a particular purpose in mind — it is a chair to sit deeply in to relax. With its heavy padded black leather cushions and solid pure shapes, it is elegant yet masculine. Le Corbusier's respect for materials and concern for the articulation of geometric forms is evident here, as in his architecture. We can also see links to the monumental, sculptural form of Notre Dame du Haut.



Notre Dame du Haut 1950–55
Ronchamp, Haute Saone, France
Photo: Hervé Hughes/Hemis/Corbis
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010



The Grand Confort Chair 1929
Photo: DEA/M. Carrieri
Licensed by VISCOPY 2010

HISTORICAL STUDY

Born Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris in Switzerland, he went to Paris when he was 29 and adopted as a professional pseudonym his maternal grandfather's name, Le Corbusier.

Le Corbusier maintained that the new industrial age called for a brand-new approach to architecture. The new style came to be known as the International Style, its leading architects, along with Le Corbusier, being Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. Le Corbusier's instructions for designing in this new style were to raise the buildings on stilts, use a free-flowing floor plan, make the walls independent of the structure and add horizontal strip windows.

His architectural motto became 'a house is a machine for living in'. By this he meant that everything within the structure should be unified and regular, and suit the purpose for which it was designed, like a machine. The machines he most admired were the great ocean liners, with their clean, sweeping lines. He aimed at rationality and the capacity for mass production and function. Design for purpose was an important consideration. Frequently he designed the façade of a building with large windows to emit maximum light, but for hot climates his windows were deeply recessed to create shade. He generally employed a modular system, so that different parts were related to one standard dimension.

Le Corbusier's individual style developed along the lines of cool, somewhat austere beauty with an airy sense of space. The pure, geometric, white-walled, spartan look of the International Style of the 1920s developed into a grander, more sculptural, monumental approach by the 1950s. Reinforced concrete, his favoured material, allowed Le Corbusier to explore unusual shapes, such as in his chapel at Ronchamp, France, and his buildings for Chandigarh, India. As his style progressed he continued to use concrete but tended to leave it bare and unpainted (an approach that came to be termed 'Brutalist'). At all times Le Corbusier displayed a respect for the inherent qualities of the materials he used.

Le Corbusier wrote several books on architecture, interior decoration and painting. His designs were a synthesis of mathematical precision, design for purpose, a lively imagination and a strong sculptural sense.

DISCUSSION

What are the social and economic implications of designing houses for mass production versus designing unique houses for the individual, with hand-crafting as an ideal?

STUDYING ARCHITECTURE

- 1 What was Le Corbusier's motto for designing housing?
- 2 In your own words, give a definition of the International Style of architecture.
- 3 What new building method/material allowed Le Corbusier to change his style to more free-flowing, sculptural designs?
- 4 What were some of Le Corbusier's new ideas for buildings?
- 5 How did his style change over time?

ARTMAKING

Working in groups, design your own city of the future. Consider flexibility of uses of space, open green areas, delivery of services, energy use, transportation and access to ICT.

Allocate individual roles within your group. For example, each group might have a good researcher (someone who loves finding facts), a report writer (someone who is good with words), a creative thinker (someone who thinks laterally and unconventionally), a peacemaker (in case you don't all agree) and someone with good time-management skills.

GLOSSARY

- Aboriginal** of the Indigenous people of Australia except those of the Torres Strait region 43
- abstraction** of art that is non-representational and achieves its effects through colour, line and form 181
- aerial perspective** technique that makes distant objects lighter and bluer in tone 157
- aesthetic** relating to beauty 184
- aesthetics** branch of philosophy dealing with the expression of beauty 232
- allegories** stories or poems in which events or characters have symbolic meaning 4
- ambiguity** uncertainty, open to interpretation, with more than one possible meaning 15
- appropriation** the practice of borrowing images or elements from other sources and using them in new and interesting ways to change their meaning and add contemporary significance. This Postmodern method leads us to consider the concept of originality in art and how images are altered through technological means. 65
- articulated** clearly expressed; also segments put together using joints 227
- assemblage** a three-dimensional work made by combining different materials 134
- assembling** creating an assemblage, an artwork that combines a range of objects 24
- avant-garde** new, experimental 184
- biases** prejudices, opinions that prevent a fair consideration 60
- body language** physical movements and postures that communicate non-verbally our feelings and attitudes 69
- cantilevering** projecting a rigid structure so that it juts out well beyond its vertical support 228
- Classical** describes ancient Greek and Roman art 154
- cliché** an obvious remark or expression 60
- collage** a single artwork made up of an arrangement of diverse images and/or materials 187
- commercialise** reduce to a product that can be bought and sold 55
- composition** the placement or organisation of figures and objects in an artwork 155
- confronting** boldly challenging or opposing, shocking 55
- contemporary** of this time, generally in the past 10–15 years; up to date 15
- context** the setting in which a work is created or displayed — its surroundings, time or place, the facts or circumstances of an event 61
- contrapposto** posture in which the shoulders and chest are turned slightly one way, the hips and legs another, with the weight resting mainly on one leg 153
- convention** an accepted way, rule or standard, an agreed system 21
- Cubism** a modern art movement (c. 1907–25) that introduced a radically new approach to painting, abandoning realistic representation, working from multiple viewpoints, analysing, fragmenting and rearranging elements 199
- depiction** representation, the way something is shown 182
- dismembered** separated body parts, limbs cut off 34
- disorient** unsettle, confuse 70
- displacement** removal from one's home; exile 131
- disquiet** unease, anxiety 14
- distortion** quality of being slightly out of shape 183
- dramatic** like a play; containing drama, emotion or conflict 154
- Dreaming** ancient time of creation, according to Aboriginal spiritual beliefs, whose stories often involve the journey of an ancestral spirit 43
- dynamism** great energy, liveliness 196
- elongated** stretched, distended, made thinner and longer 223
- environment** art form that is an independent, three-dimensional space to be entered by the viewer 193
- expression** indication of emotion on the face 154
- facet** a smooth, flat surface or plane, as of a gemstone 185
- folklore** traditional beliefs, stories, customs 4
- foreboding** threatening, a sense of danger or evil to come 11
- foreground** area at the front of the image, closest to the viewer 175
- foreshortening** applying perspective so that objects or parts of the body that are closer are depicted as larger 158
- fragmented** broken up into pieces, disintegrated 194
- Great Depression** the worldwide economic slump in the 1930s resulting in mass unemployment, poverty and hardship 50
- grotesque** bizarre, unnaturally ugly or horrifying 34
- harmony** pleasing combination of different parts 153
- haunting** unnerving, worrying 13
- idealised** presented in an ideal form, without imperfections 152
- in the round** three-dimensional, viewable from all sides 151

- incongruous** unlikely together, an unusual combination 200
- installation** artwork created for a particular site or gallery, creating a complete environment 60
- intriguing** exciting curiosity or interest 133
- introspection** looking inwards to your own thoughts and feelings 12
- intuitively** working from feelings and hunches rather than reason or knowledge 24
- land art** (sometimes called earth sculpture) refers to works outdoors. Land artists (e.g. Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer and Richard Serra) seek contact with natural, uncontaminated places. 52
- linear perspective** technique that represents depth by drawing lines that converge on a vanishing point 157
- malleable** flexible, can be reshaped 200
- manifesto** a group's statement of aims or policies 195
- minimalism** approach using pure, simple, often precise forms to create art 54
- model** to blend light to dark to create three-dimensional solidity 158
- Modernism** art movement of the twentieth century that made a self-conscious break with art traditions through styles such as Cubism, Expressionism, Fauvism, Futurism and Surrealism 220
- monochromatic** using tones of only one basic colour 178
- morphing** changing form or shape 16
- mother country** for Aboriginal people, refers to the country of the person's mother's group. 'Country' is an area traditionally owned and looked after by an Aboriginal language group or community or certain people within it, and includes the spiritual meanings and stories associated with the area. 43
- motif** a recurring idea, image or shape 24
- mundane** everyday, ordinary 193
- mysticism** spiritual beliefs often unrelated to formal religious doctrine 81
- narrative** story 157
- non-objective** abstract, without reference to real objects 199
- ochre** soft, crumbly stone, generally yellow or red-brown 21
- oppression** control, persecution and mistreatment backed by force 131
- optimism** positive feeling that everything will turn out for the best 56
- organic** based on natural forms or shapes 222
- pacifist** someone who rejects the use of war or violence as a means to resolve conflict 34
- pathos** a quality that arouses a feeling of pity or sadness 158
- perception** insight, awareness of senses 187
- perspective** way of seeing. In aerial perspective distant objects are lighter and bluer in tone, with softer edges. Linear perspective is a geometrical method of representing spatial relationships and depth on a two-dimensional surface by drawing lines that converge on a vanishing point. 155
- plane** flat or level surface 185
- Postmodern** an art movement that challenges art traditions and the idea of originality 60
- predominated** stood out, appeared more obvious 178
- projective** recorded video that is projected onto a wall or other surface 70
- provocative** aiming to stir up or arouse 60
- readymade** a found object used in an artwork 191
- reinforced concrete** concrete that has been strengthened with steel rods or mesh 228
- Renaissance** (art) inspired by the rediscovery of classical Greek and Roman ideals; the Renaissance art movement saw a growing emphasis on humankind and nature rather than on religious subjects alone 158
- representational art** lifelike, realistic art 175
- sacred** worthy of religious respect, dedicated to religion 43
- sarcasm** scornful or cutting comments 4
- sensational** causing great excitement or controversy 55
- serene** calm, peaceful 174
- site-specific art** art created for a particular site or location, generally outdoors. It offers an experience unique to the viewer at that location. Originating in the 1960s, it challenged traditional ideas about the nature of art and the way it should be displayed (see also Christo and Jeanne-Claude, page 83). 53
- solitary** alone, isolated 49
- spontaneity** concerned with acting impulsively based on emotion rather than careful thought or planning 176
- stylised** greatly simplified according to a set of conventions or a stereotype 216
- subjective** based on an individual's feelings, thoughts and imagination 13
- sumptuous** rich, luxurious 184
- surreal** dreamlike, unreal, fantastic 14
- symbol** a picture sign (such as a hand held up meaning 'stop'); a visual image that stands for a word or meaning 215
- sympathetic** compassionate, understanding 49
- tactile** relating to the sense of touch 16
- technological reproduction** creation of multiple copies by a machine such as a printer or photocopier 215
- tonal contrast** light colours near dark ones (or white against black) 14
- triptych** a painting consisting of three panels that work together as a group 4
- unify** work as one, bring together 158
- vibrancy** liveliness, energy and bold colour 176
- whimsical** imaginatively comical, unpredictable 24

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(Note: Bold page number indicates image)

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